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# An Ethnography of Tourism and Traditional Irish Music in Doolin, Ireland

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11 JAN 2005

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
for the requirements of  
the degree of PhD

November 2004

**Adam Robert Kaul**

**“An Ethnography of Tourism and Traditional Irish Music in Doolin, Ireland”**

**Abstract**

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the complex interplay between tourism and traditional Irish music based on fourteen months of fieldwork in Doolin, County Clare, Ireland between June 2002 and August 2003. The historical development of traditional Irish music and the localised tourist industry have become conjoined during the last three decades, and as a result the music and the idea of Doolin as a ‘place’ have become institutionalised and consolidated. This has further led to the development of a complex socio-economic structure surrounding the music, its performance, and its commercialisation and consumption. The local social structure has also become complicated and internationalised. Specifically, the locale has seen a significant growth in the ‘incomer’ population, called ‘blow-ins’. Blow-ins in this case have in fact become the inheritors and propagators of the local music scene, but this causes surprisingly little cognitive dissonance or tension between locals and incomers. This is despite the fact that the music is the *raison d’être* of the local tourism industry. I propose that those incomers who successfully inherit and propagate the local music become assets to the cultural capital of the village, not a drain on it. Moreover, I suggest that the ‘authenticity’ of the music is not an ascribed quality but interdependently related to social status, seasonality, one’s relationship with the music, context, and phenomenologically intersubjective relations. By means of holistic anthropological research, this thesis attempts to refine our understanding of complex social relations in touristed destinations, the appropriation of musical ‘traditions’, and sharpen current anthropological theories surrounding the issues of ‘authenticity’ and globalisation.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of the two Gussie's  
that contributed so much of themselves to their community  
and the music that they loved—

Gussie O'Connor (1927 – 2003)  
Gussie Russell (???? – 2004)

God rest them.

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This thesis derives from work undertaken by the author between October 2001 and August 2004 under the supervision of Dr. Tamara Kohn in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Durham. The material included here is original and no part of it has been submitted previously for any degree at any university. This thesis is approximately 100,000 words in length.

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# Chapter One—Introduction

## I.

### **Abstract**

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the complex interplay between tourism and traditional Irish music based on fourteen months of fieldwork in Doolin, County Clare, Ireland between June 2002 and August 2003. The historical development of traditional Irish music and the localised tourist industry have become conjoined during the last three decades, and as a result the music and the idea of Doolin as a 'place' have become institutionalised and consolidated. This has further led to the development of a complex socio-economic structure surrounding the music, its performance, and its commercialisation and consumption. The local social structure has also become complicated and internationalised. Specifically, the locale has seen a significant growth in the 'incomer' population, called 'blow-ins'. Blow-ins in this case have in fact become the inheritors and propagators of the local music scene, but this causes surprisingly little cognitive dissonance or tension between locals and incomers. This is despite the fact that the music is the *raison d'être* of the local tourism industry. I propose that those incomers who successfully inherit and propagate the local music become assets to the cultural capital of the village, not a drain on it. Moreover, I suggest that the 'authenticity' of the music is not an ascribed quality but interdependently related to social status, seasonality, one's relationship with the music, context, and phenomenologically intersubjective relations. By means of holistic anthropological research, this thesis attempts to refine our understanding of complex social relations in touristed destinations, the appropriation of musical 'traditions', and sharpen current anthropological theories surrounding the issues of 'authenticity' and globalisation.

## II.

### **Placing the Present Study in the Extant Literature**

This thesis, while firmly grounded in social anthropology, taps into two other disciplines: ethnomusicology and tourism studies. Since all three disciplines are naturally broad by themselves, part of the challenge of the present thesis is to marry their significant literatures for the useful analysis of the present ethnographic context. My approach in this project has always been to start with the ethnography and to only then try to explain its significance with theory. Theories are tools and we should not lose our focus on the people we

study by becoming technicians, devoted only to the beauty of the tools we create. Rather, theories are useful when they help us understand the complexity of experience. As Layton has pointed out, "[t]heory guides the way in which we separate interesting from trivial events during fieldwork" creating "a dialogue between theory and ethnography" (2000:101).

The literature review below reflects the areas of social anthropology, ethnomusicology and tourism studies that are significant for the following thesis, and conversely, are areas where this thesis attempts to refine anthropological theory. The point is not to illustrate what I have read as much as it is to place the current research in the extant literature. I begin with a review of the general ethnography of Ireland, and then focus on the issue of incomers. Next, I review the study of Irish music. Finally, I examine some themes emerging from social studies of tourism and then focus particularly on tourism in Ireland.

### **An Irish Ethnographic Backdrop**

Donnan and Ruane have noted that "[t]he development of anthropological research on Ireland has paralleled the growth of the discipline internationally" (1991:2). Irish ethnography began with an early study on the Aran Islands in 1891 by Haddon and Browne (*ibid.*). Later, anthropology's incipient but growing concern with 'western'<sup>1</sup> nations was manifest in Ireland with Arensberg and Kimball's famous study conducted in the 1930's in County Clare as part of the interdisciplinary Harvard Irish Study (Arensberg 1959[1937], Arensberg and Kimball 1968[1940]).

Arensberg and Kimball's influence was felt by many ethnographers for years to come. This was so much the case that Wilson, when reviewing the ethnography of Ireland up to the mid-1970's, posited that

after Arensberg and Kimball completed their research... ethnographers, with few exceptions, have utilised the same unit of analysis (the community), the same focus for the analysis of social life (kinship and social structure), and the same theoretical model of local society (structural-functionalism)" (1984:1).

On the one hand, Wilson's critique of their work as a classic functionalist characterisation of a stable Irish community, wholly bounded unto itself through its parts, is not entirely true. As Byrne *et al* have argued, Arensberg and Kimball "do not describe a static, changeless society" (2001:iii). On the other hand, it is true that their ethnographic data came to represent *the* version of Ireland, *the*

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis, I use a double inverted comma to indicate a quote and a single inverted comma to highlight concept or term. Secondly, single inverted commas inside quotes indicate where cited authors used quotations themselves.

model against which most subsequent findings would be compared (Wilson 1984:3), at least in the Republic. For example, Wilson argues that when future ethnographers found situations that countered that first representation, they either concluded that Irish society was 'declining' (Brody 1973), had already 'passed away' (Scheper-Hughes 1979), or that their data represented a regional variant of the relative functional stability of Arensberg and Kimball's Ireland, as in ethnographies of northern Ireland such as Harris (1972), Leyton (1975), or other 'anomalous' places like Tory Island (Fox 1995[1978]). Topically, the pattern was consistent as well. Of the 21 ethnographic studies carried out between 1932 and 1975 that Wilson reviewed, social structure and kinship form the backdrop for most of them (1984:4).

Following Arensberg and Kimball's work, major publications about the ethnography of Ireland are not forthcoming until the late 1960s when Messenger brought the anthropological lens back to the Aran Islands. He eventually produced *Inis Beag: Isle of Ireland* in 1969<sup>2</sup>. This was quickly followed by a rake of anthropological publications including Harris (1972), Brody (1973) and Leyton (1975).

In the 1970's, ideas like psychoanalysis (Scheper-Hughes 1979) and political economy (Bax 1976, Taylor 1980) were being applied to the Irish context, and during the 1980's and 1990's the variety of theoretical approaches to the ethnography of Ireland grew exponentially. Anthropologists have continued to question the assumptions created by an earlier generation of anthropologists. Kockel for example has written extensively from the late 1980's to the present on Ireland as it exists in a European context (1992 with Ruane, and 1994, 1995). Glassie, a folklorist, produced a massive tome on a small, rural community in county Fermanagh (1995[1982]) which is grounded in folkloristics, but takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining the historical with the ethnographic, and material culture with oral culture. Silverman and Gulliver (1992, 1995) began to look more seriously at historical contexts of the Irish ethnographic project as well.

Short, topical pieces in the form of articles and chapters in edited volumes have become the fashion since the 1980s. In addition to continuing along more traditional lines of analysis, ethnographers now deal with any number of issues. Some have explored urban spaces (Curtin, Donnan and Wilson 1993). For others, physical spaces are no longer binding. Topical research allows today's social scientists to dislodge behaviour from a physical place. For example, Ruane (1989) explores globalised relationships in an article about a German factory in

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<sup>2</sup> Messenger's "Inis Beag" is actually Inisheer, the closest of the Aran Islands to Doolin. Messenger's photographs still adorn the walls of one of the island's pubs. The wreck of *The Plassey*, the boat that ran aground during one of his first weeks of fieldwork, rusts away on its eastern shore and has become something of a tourist attraction.

western Ireland. Wulff primarily looks at the social world surrounding Irish dance and dance competitions. The competitions move annually and are supported by a 'public' (who are often strangers), not a geographically bound 'community' (forthcoming, 2003a, 2003b). To some extent, the traditional Irish music session<sup>3</sup> is another 'spaceless space' because it is a social environment created by musicians, one that can in theory exist anywhere and with anyone else from the traditional Irish music 'public'. Oliver (2001) has recently provided another interesting example of this kind of physically boundless research. She looked at coach tourists as they moved through the physical spaces of Ireland. Finally, the issue of 'modernity' in general and its impact on contemporary Ireland was taken up by various authors in a volume edited by Peillon and Slater (1998).

More recently, Salazar (1996) and Peace (2001) return us to a classic anthropological *modus operandi* by producing a holistic ethnographies of single places, grounded in space and time. Yet, from the start, both authors take on board the lessons learned from recent anthropological explorations into issues of the modern world and the flows between the local and the global. The present ethnography is, in part, an attempt to join these authors.

The anthropology of Ireland has long been divided conceptually by the border between the north and the south. As Donnan and Ruane have pointed out, the focus in Northern Ireland has typically been on religious and political conflict, while research in the south followed Arensberg and Kimball's lead more closely by focusing on 'community', kinship and social structure (1991:3). Another pattern which emerges out of the literature is the fact that in the past non-Irish anthropologists overwhelmingly dominated the anthropology of Ireland (*ibid.*). However, this began to change more recently too. By the late 1980's, works like *Ireland From Below* (Curtin and Wilson, ed., 1989) were being published, and as a sign of the times, about half of the authors in that collection of essays are either Irish or were working there permanently (Kockel and Ruane 1992:10). A brief scan of recent works shows that this pattern of Irish reflexivity continues, and this is at least in part because anthropology has finally 'come home' to Ireland. The first department of social anthropology was established on the isle of Ireland in 1973 at Queen's University Belfast (Donnan and Ruane 1991:1). Ten years later, a social anthropology department was established at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, in the Republic of Ireland, and since then, the

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<sup>3</sup> 'Sessions' are the musical context most often discussed in the following thesis. These are the events where tourists interact with traditional Irish music in Doolin. Hamilton defines a session this way: "A loose association of musicians who meet, generally, but not always, in a pub to play an unpredetermined selection, mainly of dance music, but sometimes with solo pieces such as slow airs or songs. There will be one or more 'core' musicians, and others who are less regular. It has become such an all pervasive form of traditional music performance that it has led many to believe that it has a much longer pedigree than is actually the case" (1999:345).



numbers of anthropologists employed in Ireland (north and south) has increased steadily (*ibid.*:1-2).

In the following thesis, I attempt to go beyond a more simplistic 'community' model set forth by earlier anthropologists by illustrating the global interaction with local places, its historicity (especially in chapters 2, 3 and 4), and the dynamic social changes that occur as a result (chapters 5 and 6). Thereby, I hope to refine anthropological understandings of the notions of 'tradition', appropriation and 'authenticity' (chapters 7, 8 and 9). At the same time, like the recent work conducted by Peace (2001), this ethnography is situated in a small village on the west coast of Ireland. In other words, I attempt to continue the challenge to bounded community studies in the same kind of context that it emerged from.

### **Comparative Ethnography on Incomers**

The historical developments that I present in chapters 2, 3 and 4 have led to more than just economic and musical changes. The people who occupy and pass through the village have changed a great deal as well. In chapter 5, I describe the internal complexity of individuals that are often lumped together in the category of the 'tourist'. In chapter 6, I look at those people who have moved to Doolin from other parts of Ireland or other nations and now permanently reside there. In the academic literature they are often called 'newcomers' or 'incomers', but in Ireland, they are called 'blow-ins'. Blow-ins have only rarely been mentioned in the anthropological literature on Ireland, which is surprising since the term is used widely and frequently throughout Ireland. The conspicuous paucity of an analysis of these incomers is even more glaring given their increasing numbers and influence in touristed communities like Doolin where blow-ins are more likely to settle. For example, in the seminal edited volume on tourism in Ireland (O'Connor and Cronin, eds., 1993), there isn't a single mention of blow-ins, incomers or newcomers.

Peace defines them and discusses them on occasion in his work in Inveresk (2001), but they are clearly a secondary distinction in Peace's analysis of social structure. It may simply be because blow-ins don't make a major presence there. This would not be surprising. There are communities close to Doolin where the number of blow-ins is small, and they would make less of an impact. In fact, although considerable numbers of blow-ins are scattered throughout Clare, Doolin is widely known in the region for its significantly large population of blow-ins. In a recent volume on *Irish Tourism* (2003) edited by Cronin and O'Connor, Casey does briefly address the issue of incomers, and indeed, in the context of a village just north of Doolin. In an interesting contrast to the assessments of the

permanent residents in Doolin (including incomers and locals), she reports that blow-ins are described as somewhere in between returning visitors and tourists (see chapter 5) on a kind of spectrum (*ibid.*). Also unlike Doolin where I was told that a blow-in could never become a local, Casey describes 'outsiders' or 'newcomers' as a "new type of 'local'" (2003:50). The differences in definitions and treatment of incomers described by Peace, Casey and in chapter 6 of this thesis highlight the polysemy of the term 'blow-in', the meaning of which may change slightly depending on a specific place's relationship with incomers and tourists. Indeed, while there are certain boundaries around various social statuses, classificatory terminology is used differently by different people in different contexts.

The issue of incomers have received more attention in other contexts. Frankenberg, in his early influential ethnography on a Welsh community (1957), called incomers 'strangers', but he found that the term was a shifting one (*ibid.*:18-19). Sometimes, the category of 'the stranger' was applied to deviant locals. Conversely, in other contexts, those who would be normally defined as 'strangers' would be considered locals. The shifting nature of the definition resulted from whatever advantage might have been gained (*ibid.*). 'Outsiders', 'strangers', and locals in Frankenberg's assessment seem to exist along a very unimpeded continuum. Frankenberg gives the impression that there do not seem to be the hard-and-fast boundaries that exist in other ethnographic situations (see below). Villagers in some cases took "little or no interest in the personal affairs of 'outsiders'" (*ibid.*). In local committees, 'outsiders', or 'strangers' (here, Frankenberg collapses the terms), were allowed to take on the appearance of leadership in local politics because locals were then able to argue that they themselves were not making the controversial decisions. In so doing, they more or less avoided direct confrontations with each other (*ibid.*:18, 78-88).

Ennew, discusses three main types of incomers, or what she calls "newcomers", on the western Scottish isle of Lewis (1980:117-119). First, 'short-stay newcomers' bring their families for short periods for "employment in some 'official position'" (*ibid.*:117). They aren't terribly interested in integration, although the men, due to their employment, are intensely involved, and are often quite critical of the local culture. Secondly, there are two types of newcomers who "have been attracted by the romantic image" (*ibid.*). The first is an older generation of folks who tend to marry locals and raise bilingual (and presumably bi-cultural) children. The second group are young people who have an intensely romantic image of island life, and are even at odds with the locals who tend to be more disparaging of their disappearing traditions. They have a more distinct mode of dress than those who marry in, and actually have a much harder time

adjusting to local life because they are much more inflexible about how they define 'the good life'. "In most cases," she writes, "they leave disappointed after a relatively short stay" (*ibid.*:117). This is not uncommon in Doolin, but many have stayed. Moreover, when she writes that "[f]ew of these newcomers have any lasting effect upon local life" (*ibid.*:118), we must end the comparison. As we shall see, this is very different from the case in Doolin where the blow-ins, hand-in-hand with locals, have helped radically alter local life.

Phillips' definitions of 'locals' and 'incomers' in a touristed north Yorkshire community called Muker (1986:141) mirror, almost exactly, the way in which 'locals' and 'blow-ins' were described to me in Doolin. He describes how, through a multiplicity of "markers of belonging" (*ibid.*:143), such as kinship, a 'farmer's disposition', maintaining local employment, a local dialect, and the length of given individuals' association with the village, local people and incomers negotiate a sense of belonging to the community (*ibid.*:143-144). Some of these markers, such as kinship, dialect usage, and employment, are markers of exclusivity in Muker, but other markers such as one's length of association with the locale, can create a sense of belonging for the incomer (*ibid.*). Like Ennew (1980:117), Phillips makes a finer distinction which is worth considering here between the 'new incomer' and the 'old incomer' (*ibid.*:144). According to Phillips, the 'old incomers' are considered "local[s] now" (*ibid.*:144). The distinction between the 'new' and the 'old' incomers is comparable in Doolin, but as we will see, the notion that 'old incomers' can become 'locals' is significantly different, according to the Doolin people.

In other places in Britain, incomers have a more difficult time coming to belong than in Muker. Ahmed and Mynors (1994) report that the divisions between locals and incomers in Fowlmere are much more distinct, and that tensions override feelings of community (*ibid.*:3). Strathern also found that 'newcomers' sometimes had a difficult time entering fully into local life in a village in Essex (1981:4).

Kousis (1989:329) makes brief mention of a phenomenon that also occurs in Doolin. On the island of Crete, she found that, due to the introduction of tourism and the resulting relaxation of sexual mores, "the local men... systematically dated foreign women" which "might on occasion lead to marriage" (*ibid.*). In Doolin, like in this village on Crete, the marriages between blow-ins and locals follow a consistent pattern in that local men tend to marry female blow-ins, not the other way around.

Waldren (1996, 1997) has looked at the complex relationship between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the Spanish island of Mallorca in extensive detail. She found that, in this touristed destination, insiders employed two different

terms for outsiders: 'forasters' and 'estrangers' (1996:139). Forasters are people who were born outside of the locale, but are Spanish citizens. An estranger is a foreigner, a non-Spanish person. In this multicultural context, Waldren found that it was in fact the forasters who were "quite intrusive in local affairs" and could rouse unnecessary controversies (*ibid.*:140). Non-Spanish foreigners on the other hand, were often even "more welcome than 'forasters'" (*ibid.*).

Kohn found a complex arena of fluid identifications on a Scottish island in the Inner Hebrides, complicating the more simplistic popularly cited categories of 'hosts' and 'guests' (1997). *Emic* categories included 'day-trippers', 'Yachties', 'tourists', 'summer swallows', 'Glasgow cousins', and 'islanders' (*ibid.*:16-20). Despite the essentialising, distinct sound of these categories, she argues that they are in fact largely boundless. Instead, they are more like points on a continuum (*ibid.*:23). One could pass through one category in to the next. "[I]ncomers", she writes, "found themselves sliding along the incomer-islander continuum, and delighting in whatever advancement in status this brought" (*ibid.*:23). Arguably, these transitions may have been easier for some than they were in Mallorca because in this Scottish context, most of the visitors to the island were of a relatively regional origin: other parts of Scotland, England and Wales (*ibid.*:17). There might not have been as deep a level of cultural difference as in a touristed destination like Mallorca (or indeed Doolin). More recently (2002a), Kohn has taken up the issue of 'belonging' in relation to this continuum. She argues that, more through the action of the everyday than by adopting the more obvious symbolic markers of identity, one comes to 'belong' (*ibid.*:143).

This thesis continues an exploration of these in-between categories in touristed destinations. In the present ethnographic context, the ways in which blow-ins are included in social life are explored in detail (in chapter 6), and it is noted that while tensions arise over their ability to get involved in the political and economic spheres, their inclusion in the musical life of the village passes without significant resistance (chapter 8). Indeed, as I will illustrate, incomer-musicians are welcomed into the community and have all but taken over the paid sessions. This thesis, therefore, intends to contribute to the literature on incomers in Ireland and the British Isles by complicating the conflation of the notions of locality, local people and 'traditions'.

### **The Literature on Traditional Irish Music**

Writing in 1964, Nettl defined ethnomusicology as the study of "the music outside western civilization and, to a smaller extent, of European folk music", and is situated conceptually between "musicology at large and... cultural anthropology" (1964:1). On the one hand, he argued, ethnomusicologists are

specialised musicologists and on the other, a kind of specialised anthropologist (*ibid.*:2). So according to Nettl's classic definition, the present thesis engages with the field of ethnomusicology. According to more recent definitions—that ethnomusicology is the study of “music in oral tradition and living musical systems” in all cultures including the ‘West’ (Myers 1992:3)—this thesis is in fact an ethnomusicological piece. However, while I outline some of the major technical points about traditional Irish music in the thesis as they are deemed necessary for the discussions at hand, my primary concern is with its social aspects, and in particular, its co-development alongside tourism in northwest Clare, its modern expressions and functions, and how various people perceive it today. Ethnomusicology is a huge field in its own right, and I do not have the space to detail its whole complicated history. More importantly, while this thesis opportunistically dabbles in, and hopefully contributes to, multiple fields including ethnomusicology, it is grounded primarily in social anthropology.

A great deal has been written recently on various aspects of traditional Irish music in the popular literature, everything from its technical structures in dozens of tune-books (cf. Cotter 1989) to its sociological, historical and subjective aspects (Carson 1996, Coady 1996, Ó hAllmhuráin 1998, Foy 1999, Skinner Sawyers 2000). Likewise, the academic literature on Irish music is not lacking. Traditional Irish dance tunes, the primary musical focus of this thesis, have been analysed and discussed by folklorists and collectors for well over 100 years (Meek 1999:44). In fact, the folklorists Seamus Ó Duillearga and Seamus Ennis both made their way to Doolin on various occasions to collect tunes, songs and stories in the first half of the twentieth century (Curtis 1994:152, Byrne *et al* 2001:LII). In 1996, traditional Irish music became the subject of an important conference attended by academics as well as traditional musicians (Vallely *et al* 1999). Besides this volume, other academic pieces have analysed various aspects of traditional Irish music (Breathnach 1971; Cowdery 1990; Henry 1989; Koning 1980; McCann 2001, 2002; Shields and Gershen 2000; Sommers Smith 2001; Vainekainen 2000, Williams 2004). Finally, Stokes and Bohlman (2003) have recently edited a volume entitled *Celtic Modern* in which the global phenomenon of so-called ‘celtic’ musics including traditional Irish music is analysed by its contributors. This volume is welcome, but does not specifically address the important impact of tourism in any detail. It does address the issue of commoditisation of music, but as one author points out, “a thoroughgoing, theoretically sophisticated treatment of music as a commodity has yet to be written” (Taylor 2003:279). It is a hole in the literature that I hope to begin filling.

In 1992, Hazel Fairbairn wrote a PhD. thesis in musicology on 'group playing' and heterophony in Irish music (later summarised in Fairbairn 1994) which essentially analyses the traditional Irish music context of the session. Fairbairn draws upon her multi-sited fieldwork in Irish and English musical contexts to analyse the technical effects of group playing on what was once considered a primarily solo art-form. Usefully though, one comparative chapter is devoted to Doolin and the impacts that tourism has had on the music there. Another academic work that is relevant here is a master's thesis in folklore by Cathy Larson Sky on the traditional dance music of county Clare (1997) which principally contrasts the functions of two different musical contexts: the country house dances during the 'auld days' and the modern All-Ireland competition (1997:iii). A cultural geographer, Moya Kneafsey, has discussed the interactions between tourism and traditional Irish music in northern county Mayo (1994, 2002, 2003) where she has conducted short-term but longitudinal fieldwork. She argues that a symbiotic relationship has developed between tourists and musicians in north Mayo (2003:35).

My research complements these previous studies in four ways. First, my approach has been to take a holistic approach to the relationship between tourism and traditional Irish music through time and starting from the perspective of a single place, including all aspects of social life that come into play. Secondly, the revival period in Doolin, which I take to be a key historical development effecting the modern expression of the music in northwest Clare, has not yet been seriously analysed. Thirdly, the dramatic seasonal differences in the interaction between tourism and traditional Irish music have not been considered. Finally, traditional Irish music exists on two levels: the trans-local and the local (see chapter 8 for an extended discussion), and at the local level, its history, style, and the way in which it is expressed in relation to tourism today are geographically dependent (Kneafsey 2003:37-38). In other words, due to different local histories, styles of playing, and a given place's particular relationship with tourism, the modern musical-tourist interaction will be very different. Therefore, the present thesis not only attempts to document another localised variation of the relationship between tourism and traditional Irish music, but also to provide a more complete picture of its historical and global/local interaction, and its affect on all aspects of the local lifeworld.

Generally speaking, traditional Irish music is a 'living folk tradition', which is to say that it is primarily transmitted from one individual to another, one generation to another, largely through verbal and experiential instruction and practice. I use the term 'traditional' as in 'traditional Irish music' with abandon throughout the course of this thesis. 'Traditional' is a descriptive form of the

word 'tradition'. I understand the term 'tradition' to mean a cultural practice, ritual or behaviour with some historic continuity with the past. Some traditions may be unchangeably formulaic and hermetically preserved, but a *living* tradition is one that's allowed to change over time. Moreover, as I show in the following thesis, while a tradition may be seen to represent a culture, it is not necessarily coterminous with the culture that it represents; in other words, it can thrive independently in multiple cultural contexts. In this respect, my perspective about the revival of traditional Irish music and its modern expression departs from the sharp language of 'invented traditions' proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) by illustrating the relationship between change and continuity in this living tradition over time.

I justify the descriptive use of *traditional* Irish music for a number of reasons. First, the popular literature on traditional Irish music usually uses this descriptor because 'Irish music' could theoretically include rock, pop, or classical music performed by Irish people. Furthermore, this is the most common *emic* descriptor (often shortened to 'traditional music', 'trad music', or the onomatopoeic label 'diddle-dee-dee'). Thirdly, I could use the term Irish 'dance music' since the music I discuss herein primarily consists of the jigs, reels and hornpipes that originally accompanied Irish set dancing, but 'dance music' also describes a modern pop genre played in dance clubs. Traditional Irish music and dancing have been largely separated anyway (see chapters 2 and 3 especially), and therefore it's not as applicable anymore. Fourth, looked at historically, the common dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' is too simplistic. In other words, I fully stand by the implication in the term 'traditional' that there is a continuity with the past. The Dance Halls Act and the Revival are just two examples of past ('modernising', 'globalising') influences that have radically changed Irish music in the past. I take issue with the contention that amplification, the recording industry or tourism are much more radically 'modern' than these past influences. Therefore, I use 'traditional' herein because it is used *emically*, and it is useful insofar that it is *adequately* descriptive. Furthermore, I contend that even paid-for sessions performed for tourists are largely 'traditional' affairs, albeit adapted to modern circumstances. Having said all that, I recognise the loaded nature of the term and its equation with notions of 'authenticity', etc., which I plan to unpack in the course of the thesis.

My contributions to the field of ethnomusicology are threefold. First, this research adds to the growing literature that deals with the way in which music interacts with processes of globalisation in Ireland (cf. Keohane 1997; Sommers Smith 2001; McCann 2001, 2002; Stokes and Bohlman 2003; Kneafsey 2002, 2003) and in the world generally (cf. Bohlman 1988, Stokes 1994, Nercessian

2002, Connell and Gibson 2003). Secondly, there is a small but growing literature specifically to do with folk revivals as well (Allen 1981, Blaustein 1993, Eyerman and Jamison 1998, Jabbour 1993, Livingston 1999, Munroe 1984). Finally, the interaction between tourism and music has been written about in the past (cf. Castelo-Branco 1991, Atkinson 1997), but not in sufficient ethnographic depth<sup>4</sup>.

### **Tourism Studies**

As this thesis illustrates, traditional Irish music and tourism became interdependent in places like Doolin after the Revival period. In Doolin, one could not hope to describe the tourism without describing the music and vice versa.

Before the mid-1970's, the only social scientists who had intensively concerned themselves with tourism were economists, but these studies lacked any serious ethnographic data on tourists, 'host peoples,' or their interactions (Urry 2002:133-139). Indeed, the focus for these early studies was primarily weighing the benefits versus the costs of tourist development in third world countries (for a classic example, see de Kadt 1979). This "led to an over-emphasis on quantification" (Black 1996:114) on the one hand, and on the other, to an assumption that the unequal macroeconomic relationship between two given countries would directly parallel an unequal power relationship between hosts and tourists from those countries during any sort of interaction on a personal or social level (*ibid.*:115).

To some extent, it seems surprising that anthropologists didn't take up the subject of tourism earlier. Chambers (2000) argues that this lack of attention has to do with a number of factors. First and most obviously, the mass-tourist industry is only a relatively recent phenomenon, although its growth has been phenomenal. Secondly, anthropology has changed. New theoretical approaches like interpretivism, postmodernism, and experiments in ethnographic representation have allowed us to think differently about the notion of 'community.' Indeed, according to Chambers, there seems to be less concern today with notions about 'place' than there is about social change and the interaction between peoples from different cultures (2000:2-3). However, even when the subject of tourism was finally picked up by anthropologists and other social scientists in the mid- to late-1970's, it was largely to lament its negative effects. In particular, Smith's edited volume *Hosts and Guests* (1989[1977]) tends to argue that native cultures are in fact being 'invaded' by outsiders who are 'eroding' hosts' 'traditional' ways of life (see especially Nash's contribution with its loaded title "Tourism as a Form of Imperialism", *ibid.*:37-52).

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<sup>4</sup> One exception to this is Sarkissian (1993) who did in-depth fieldwork on tourism and traditional Portuguese music in a Malaysian Portuguese community.



Picard rightly argued that this sort of "ballistic vision" of the impact of tourism is simplistic and ignores any consideration of the role of the 'host' in tourist endeavours (1993:72). One volume that takes a corrective step in this regard, and is therefore worth considering in more detail, is Boissevain's edited book *Coping With Tourists* (1996). The book effectively outlines how some host peoples have learned, while others have failed to learn, how to 'cope' with the ever-increasing pressures placed on them by a growing tourist industry. The volume illustrates various strategies that host peoples employ to create 'backstage' spaces and experiences for themselves, such as: the literal or figurative 'fencing-off' of certain spaces or social environments, creating new 'insiders-only' rituals, and the occasional organised protest, among others (Boissevain 1996:14-20). But for all of its strengths, this volume still lacks one major element: there is a noticeable paucity of any ethnographic interpretations about the tourists themselves.

This is not to say that studies on tourism do not deal with actual tourists. In fact there are many works about tourist behaviours, motivations and mentalities (most notably, Smith 1989[1977], Cohen 1979, MacCannell 1989[1976] and 1992, and Urry 1992, 1995). These early works largely made attempts to create theoretical 'taxonomies' of tourist types, but fail to provide a great deal of specific ethnographic data to back up their generalisations. During the 1990's, a number of ethnographers attempted to fill this hole in the data on tourists. One example is a volume edited by Abram, Macloed, and Waldren entitled *Tourists and Tourism* (1997). This volume begins to challenge many simplistic but pervasive notions in previous studies on tourism, suggesting that 'authenticity' does not necessarily have a directly inverse relationship to increased tourism. And most of the volume's contributors make an attempt to include detailed ethnographic descriptions of the tourists as well as their interaction with hosts. Hazel Tucker's Ph.D. thesis (1999) is still another example of a more recent push to include rigorous ethnographic data in an examination of the tourists themselves. Her study of a village in central Turkey in fact focuses primarily on the tourists—predominantly 'alternative', backpacking tourists who visit the village. More recently, Oliver (2001) studied how coach tourists in Ireland interacted with the physical spaces that they passed through.

Using standard theoretical approach to tourist situations, I might taxonomically classify the tourist seeking out performative musical contexts as a *romantic tourist* (Urry 2002:138), one who is in search of some form of 'authenticity'. I might also argue that other tourists in this situation may more or less consciously believe that certain aspects of 'Irishness' are 'staged' for their

benefit, but sincerely might not care. Using Urry's taxonomy, this would describe the *post-tourist* (*ibid.*:138), one who actually revels in post-modern, 'staged' authenticity (MacCannell 1989[1976]:298). However, in the present thesis, I suggest that the situation is far more complex, and that universal taxonomies of tourist 'types' are not all that useful. Instead of reifying tourists into *etic* typologies, chapter five takes us back down to earth and discusses the *emic* categorisations of people that are commonly called 'tourists'. I use terms that are used by the local population ('tourists', 'visitors', 'working tourists'), by the tourists themselves ('tourists', 'coach tourists', 'travellers') and also make my own distinction between the tourists that arrived during the revival (chapter 3) and the 'mass tourists' that came afterwards.

More recently, Coleman and Crang (eds., 2002) have re-examined some of the underlying "theoretical stories" (*ibid.*:1) in tourism studies. They argue that not only do tourists flow through places, but the places themselves are better conceived in terms of dynamic change (*ibid.*). The following thesis, and particularly chapter 4, documents the concretisation of the 'place' of Doolin as a result of increased tourism.

So, anthropologists were somewhat late coming into the academic discussion about tourism, but now we are paying more attention to the subject. Today, a more sophisticated understanding is emerging, one that includes more detailed ethnography on the complex relationships between local residents and tourists and more sophisticated theoretical approaches. Mirroring the increased interest in tourism generally is the increased interest in tourism in Ireland particularly.

### **Tourism in Ireland**

As John Urry argues, tourists very often choose particular destinations to visit in order to experience and 'gaze' upon the romanticised vision of the place that they have created with the overt images from the tourist industry and stereotypes they might have gleaned from their own country's popular culture (1995:132-133). Once they arrive, tourists actively seek out those experiences which best reflect the stereotypical 'signs' of this partially self-constructed romantic image (*ibid.*). Of course, a particular tourist-semiotician draws upon a seemingly endless pool of 'signs,' and the final image created is largely dependent on the tourist's previous experiences and identity (Cohen 1979:182-183). Despite the possibly endless array of combined images, everything from 'culture and history' to the landscape to beach resorts, a particularly powerful notion in Ireland is that, as one advertisement had it, it is a "land of music and easy laughter" (quoted by O'Connor 1993:72). Indeed, the Irish are represented to the

tourist as leisurely and relaxed, a people who enjoy drinking, conversing, and playing music. And as O'Connor argues, the tourist is 'told' that these are communal events which they are encouraged to join (*ibid.*). This highly charged set of romanticised images represent Ireland as a place where people live a simple yet 'authentic' peasant lifestyle (*ibid.*:73).

In 1993, Barbara O'Connor and Michael Cronin edited a volume entitled *Tourism in Ireland*—the first critical analysis of its kind—in which they made a plea in the introduction for "empirical research in all aspects of tourism" (1993:9). They wrote that "it would be invidious, if not impossible, at this point to draw up an exhaustive list of areas for further research" (*ibid.*) indicating the dire lack of studies on tourism in Ireland prior to 1993. The volume itself includes a number of excellent essays on the various dynamics of Irish tourism including its historical development (Heuston 1993:13-28, Davies 1993:29-50), the representation of Ireland to tourists (Cronin 1993:51-67, O'Connor 1993:68-85, and Nash 1993:86-114), economic and political policies concerning tourism (Deegan and Dineen 1993:115-137; Wilson 1993:138-161; and Pechenart and Tangy 1993:162-182), the 'heritage' industry (Brett 1993:183-202, Lincoln 1993:203-232), and identity and tourist practices (Byrne, Edmondson, and Fahy 1993:233-257) and domestic tourists (Peillon 1993:258-272). Other authors soon took up O'Connor and Cronin's call for more research, however.

In 1994, Kockel's edited volume *Culture, Tourism and Development: the Case of Ireland* helped to fill out our understanding of the cultural impact of tourism, while others have looked at social and economic policy (Deegan and Dineen 1997, 2000). Although Kockel's volume concentrates solely on Ireland, the goal was to contribute to a larger discussion about tourism in so-called 'peripheral' tourist regions of Europe like Ireland, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe. The book is divided up into sections on development, heritage, and the impacts on specific communities.

In that volume, Kneafsey (1994) suggests that tourists who come to hear traditional Irish music could be likened to 'cultural patrons' of a previous era—bourgeois supporters of the arts—since their implicit intention is to preserve and promote the unique expressive cultural attributes of a given region. However, a patron-client relationship changes the nature of the art-form. For example, sessions, which used to be primarily held in private homes are now more often held in pubs so that tourists can listen to and photograph this particular marker of Irish ethnicity. Musicians, she writes, are even paid and told what tunes to play. "The music continues, but for a different reason" (*ibid.*:114). In her contribution to the book *Irish Tourism: Image, Culture and Identity* (O'Connor and Cronin, eds. 2003), Kneafsey takes her patron/client argument further and

claims that tourist support for traditional Irish music in northern County Mayo is even helping to keep the tradition alive there. But again, this is an uneasy relationship. There is an inherent tension between the tourists' and the musicians' motivations and expectations (*ibid.*), and she has argued more recently that the relationship between tourism and traditional Irish music is a symbiotic one (2003:35).

Cronin and O'Connor's recent follow-up volume, *Irish Tourism* (2003), continues an exploration of the impacts of tourism on Irish culture. They argue that despite the refinement of our understanding of Irish tourism since 1993, many studies reflect a "depressing binarity. Either tourism is seen as a 'Good Thing' which brings in money, creates jobs and facilitates regional development or it is seen as intrusive, exploitative and uniquely destructive in its commodification of peoples and their cultures" (2003:3). However, they argue, taking one position or the other fails to document the true complexity of tourism. In part, they suggest that these binary views often emerge out of a lack of attention to the ethnographic realities, and they see this volume as a corrective answer (*ibid.*). As I state above, I too am devoted to explaining the ethnographic situation with theory, not the other way around, and in the following thesis I explore the intricacies of, but do not make bold value judgements about, the 'good' and the 'bad' effects of tourism. This thesis also takes up Cronin and O'Connor's call to continue a critical examination of the relationship between the 'local' and the 'global' with the same circumspection.

Research about tourism (as well as traditional musics) consistently raises questions surrounding the notion of 'authenticity'. The present thesis continues to critically examine this concept (especially in chapters 7 and 9), and the literature on 'authenticity' is worth a brief review here.

### **Authenticity**

MacCannell dealt with the issue of 'authenticity' in regards to tourism early on (1989[1976]), and continued to write about it in his second major work *Empty Meeting Grounds* (1992). His is a highly theoretical and politicised argument that sees the tourist as one of the most important players in late capitalist ideology and neo-colonial domination over supposedly authentic, 'non-Western' traditions. "Tourism", he writes, "is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature, and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture... to its own needs" (1992:1). The "ideological aggressivity of [tourism] cannot be overlooked... The drive here is not for freedom but for world-wide containment and control... one currency, one passport, one market, one government: i.e., global fascism" (*ibid.*:5). In MacCannell's opinion

all authenticity has already been eroded, and we now live in an infertile cultural landscape bereft of depth and vitality. The crux of MacCannell's neo-Marxist argument is that tourism is, ironically, one form of a larger search for authenticity in this late-capitalist, post-genuine world. MacCannell's ideas on the subject of authenticity remain popular in the tourism literature, but I am critical of his stance. His is an extreme version of what Picard called the 'ballistic vision' of tourism (1993:72), representing the pessimistic end of Cronin and O'Connor's binary assessment of tourism (2003:3).

Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential volume, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), called the historic authenticity of various supposedly antique traditions into question. More recently, Sant-Cassia has argued that "[t]radition is not just constructed or invented differently in various societies, it can be represented in various ways in a single society" (1999:259). In other words, he complicates Hobsbawm and Rangers' notion of *the* 'invented tradition' (1983) by arguing that various representative cultural expressions are contested even within a single 'invented tradition.' Chambers takes this one step further and argues that the whole debate about 'authenticity' in the tourism literature in particular simply stems from an earlier, inaccurate, functionalist premise that 'traditional cultures' arose in a state of relative isolation (2000:98). Armed with our own romantic assumptions, it is easy to leap to the conclusion that a modern social phenomenon such as tourism threatens these purely 'authentic' traditions. Chambers is "unconvinced that the real is a thing of the past, or that the past was at any time more real than the present" (*ibid.*). Authenticity should be defined according to the degree to which "people have significant control over their affairs, to the extent that they are able to play an active role in determining how changes occur in their social settings" (*ibid.*). I argue that in the case of musical performances in Ireland, this kind of understanding of authenticity is much more useful than MacCannell's.

In fact, the different ways that these authors deal with 'authenticity' reflects some underlying assumptions. Some researchers take a rigid 'objectivist approach' to the notion of authenticity in tourist contexts and apply it to social behaviours and traditions as well as objects (Wang 2000:47, 49). In other words, this approach conceives authenticity as an inherently inscribed feature of given social behaviours or actions in the same way that a museum object may be deemed 'authentic'. MacCannell's (1999[1976]:148) and Greenwood's (1989[1977]:179) early work on tourism are examples. Various authors have pointed out the simplicity of this conflation of experiences, objects and traditions (Greenwood *ibid.*, Selwyn 1996, Wang 2000:48, and in the specific context of 'living histories' see Handler and Saxton 1988:243). On the other extreme, a

postmodern perspective argues that any notion of authenticity must be abandoned altogether (Wang 2000:54).

Based on my fieldwork experiences and interviews, I disagree with both extremes. Instead, in order to understand varying perceptions about 'authenticity' of the traditional Irish music in the following thesis, I begin with what Wang has called the 'existential authenticity' of tourist experiences. She contends that "tourists are preoccupied with an *existential state of Being*, activated by certain touristic pursuits" (*ibid.*:57 emphasis in original) which, "is to be subjectively or intersubjectively experienced as the process of tourism unfolds" (*ibid.*). In other words, having an authentic experience does not rely on a museum-standard definition of the authenticity of the thing that is being experienced. This is especially true with musical experiences, as Benson has recently argued (2003). Furthermore, I will suggest that the overt commercialisation of traditional Irish music (the 'thing' being experienced in this case) does not erode its authenticity (see chapter 7). Again, researchers who contend that there is a simple and negative relationship between commercialisation and authenticity reveal the bias of their underlying value judgements about what is 'good' or 'bad'. Having said that, I do not take an extreme relativist position. I contend in chapter 9 that the concept of authenticity is perhaps too bulky and needs refinement. Common sense dictates that some people (musicians, some locals, and traditional Irish music 'connoisseurs' in particular) are simply more adept at judging the standard of quality of performances. In other words, it is useful to start with Wang's relativistic 'existential authenticity' when considering a novice listeners' perspective, but we need to also consider 'insider' knowledge when it comes to the music.

The interpretations and conclusions in the following thesis are my own of course, but they are always based on the field itself.

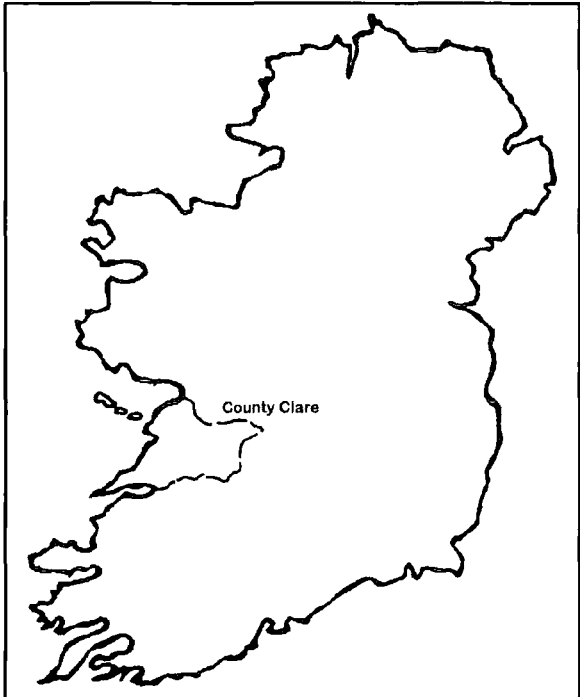
### III.

#### **Fieldwork and Methods**

In April of 2002, Rebecca and I travelled around County Clare in an attempt to find a place to carry out the present study. I knew that Clare was famous for its strong tradition of Irish music, and I knew that any village or town along the west coast of Ireland would provide a good opportunity to look at an interaction between tourism and local life. We visited three sites in particular that were well-known for traditional music. The first was the city of Ennis, the economic and political 'centre' of the county. We also visited a small town called Miltown

Malbay close to the coast where, every summer, a massive festival and school of Irish music and dance is held. On the advice of Sean Williams, an American ethnomusicologist who studies Irish music, we then made a short trip, less than 24 hours, to the coastal village of Doolin.

On the rainy afternoon that we first arrived in Doolin, we dropped our bags off at our B&B and headed into the first pub we found. We sat and drank coffee at a table not too far from the bar. It was there that I overheard an intriguing conversation unfold between the young man behind the bar and two Irish men who I presumed were locals. The barman told them about how, the previous day, they'd been "slammed by four coaches". I couldn't tell if he was Irish or American. There was certainly a mixture of accents, and I wondered what his 'story' was. The two 'locals' then asked about the previous evening's session. He



**Figure 1.1:** The isle of Ireland and County Clare

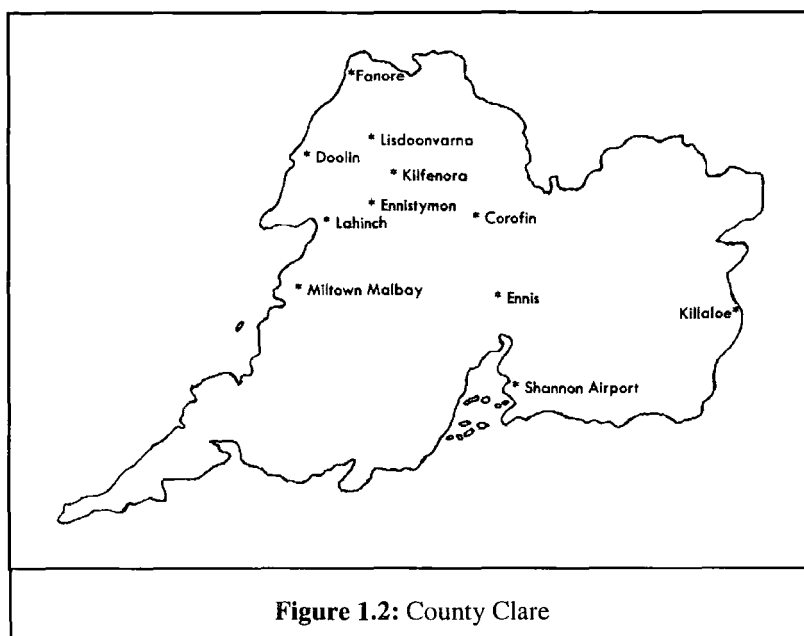
replied, "There was loads of music, but no craic". It was only a brief conversation, and the two men left shortly afterwards. But I was fascinated, and a series of questions quickly came to mind. How did this American get to this little village and become established in the community? (Or was he Irish and had lived in America for a long time?) I knew that 'craic' roughly translated to mean 'entertainment' or 'fun', but why was there "loads of music but no craic"? What exactly was the relationship between the two? Did the tourists themselves somehow deprive the music of craic, or were other factors involved?

That night, we attended a session in the same pub. There were three musicians—a fiddler, a mandolin-player and a bouzouki-player—sitting around a table in the corner in a room separated from the main part of the bar by a half-wall. As I would find out later, and as has been noted by others (Kneafsey 2003:31), there is a consistent separation in the listening audience. Tourists tend to gather around the musicians while permanent residents gather around the bar to chat. Behind the musicians was a framed sign on the wall that said "Reserved For Musicians". In fact, much of the décor in the pub advertised the fact that this was a place where one could hear traditional music. Posters from

past festivals adorned the walls, as did photographs of famous musicians. Primarily, they played 'sets' of jigs and reels<sup>5</sup>, but the instrumental dance music was occasionally interspersed by a few popular ballads sung in English by a fourth musician. The musicianship was incredible. However, I was surprised to see that the musicians used a PA system and microphones to amplify the music. The singer also used a microphone, and they also sold CDs. Was this an overt sign of commercialisation?

I also wondered how the use of microphones and a PA effected the audience's perception of the music? Was this a sign that the music was simply played for tourists' consumption?

What effect, I



**Figure 1.2:** County Clare

asked myself, does all of this have on notions of 'good craic' and people's perception of the 'authenticity' of this music? The crowd was very friendly and they clapped at the end of each set. Some of them, seated closer to where the musicians sat, were talking to the musicians. All around us were people speaking various languages. We talked to an American couple and an Irish couple from Dublin. Both couples had made their way to Doolin specifically to hear the music. French and German tourists also filled the room, and the French group bought drinks for the musicians. How did the musicians feel about all of these people making such 'pilgrimages' to hear them play, I wondered? Was it gratifying, or annoying? Were they passive 'victims' in this relationship between their music and tourism, or were they actively capitalising on it? To some extent, this thesis is an attempt to answer the questions that arose that day.

<sup>5</sup> A 'set' is made up of three or four tunes. Most tunes consist of two parts. The "A" part (sometimes also called "the tune") is generally repeated twice before going into the "B" part (sometimes called "the turn of the tune"). Each piece is repeated three or four times and then is immediately followed by the next tune. This constant repetition gives the novice listener the impression that "it all sounds the same". Normally, sets consist of only jigs (6/8 time), only reels (4/4 time), only hornpipes (syncopated 4/4 time), or less commonly, waltzes (3/4 time) or polkas (2/4 time). Some more innovative musicians today, however, mix jigs and reels into the same set to purposefully 'jar' the listener.



**Doolin**

That was my first impression of Doolin, but I came to know it better after spending fourteen months there. Doolin is a small, coastal village in northwest County Clare with fewer than 600 permanent residents. Around 100 children attend the local school. Beyond this, like many amorphous things there, the issue of what exactly is meant by the word “Doolin” is a somewhat confused one and will be examined in the course of this thesis. However, it is generally



**Figure 1.3:** The valley between the Atlantic, the Cliffs and the Burren

described in guidebooks as a village that “stretches for several kilometres along the road” (Callan *et al* 2002:447). This road lies in a valley created by the Cliffs of Moher to the south which rise dramatically up to 200 metres in the space of a few miles, and the more gentle rise of the limestone landscape of the Burren to the north. To the east lay gently rolling green hills. The Cliffs can be seen off to the south from Doolin’s pier and the Burren expresses itself in grey, mountainous lumps on the northern horizon. Off the coast, in Galway Bay, the Aran islands can be seen from Doolin’s pier in a single line, one after the other like three washed out sandcastles. On a clear day, one can see the mountains of the Connemara (the Twelve Pins) across Galway Bay. From the height of the shale mountain that creates the

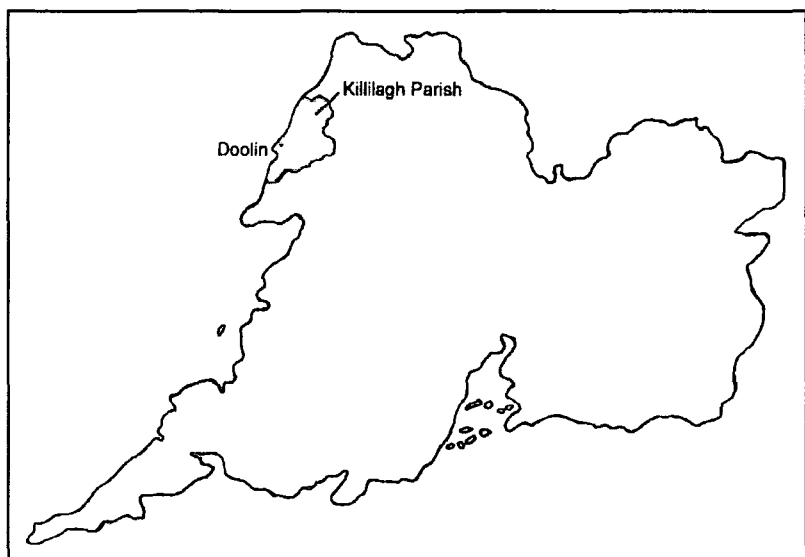


**Figure 1.4:** The Road to Doolin

Cliffs of Moher, one can look northward across this sweeping valley, and down on the scattered village of Doolin within it. From that height, the village is a confetti of buildings caught in a network of stonewalls which gives the impression that some ancient mythological giant threw up a fishing net to dry and forgot it there.

In the past, the village itself was conceptually divided into two main concentrations of buildings: Roadford, which is about a mile from the sea, and Fisherstreet which is about half a mile away. In between, along the road that runs between Roadford and Fisherstreet, more recent development has created a third concentration which is colloquially called Fitz's Cross. This is where another road meanders uphill and inland to meet the 'main road'. Another concentration of development has sprung up at this juncture as well in recent years which is called Garrihy's Cross. The main road runs along the coast to the south, climbing the backside of the Cliffs of Moher (and passing the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre) on its way to Liscannor and Lahinch. In the other direction from Garrihy's Cross, this road takes one inland towards Lisdoonvarna. The concentrations of buildings in Doolin, which I call sub-villages in the thesis (see map, page 107) should not create a scene in the reader's mind of distinct villages, however. Doolin exhibits what is known as 'ribbon development', which is to say that the buildings are separated by wide tracts of green space. In fact, all but one of the 'sub-villages' are difficult to make out unless someone points them out to you, and there is even local disagreement about how many 'sub-villages' there are. Fisherstreet is the exception to this rule. Fisherstreet is a much-photographed single row of attached buildings that curves along a parallel cut of the Aillee River which flows just in front of it.

These sub-villages are what most people consider to be Doolin when they discuss the village or the "Doolin people", but locality is not constricted to within these parameters. The old parish boundaries are the primary means by which local people



**Figure 1.5:** County Clare and Killilagh Parish

determine who is a 'local' and who is not. The parish that Doolin is situated in is a large one called *Killilagh* (shown in green on the county map, above) which includes other named areas called townlands. Some of these townland names,

like *Lough*<sup>6</sup> or *Carnaun*, are commonly used because they too have a higher concentration of inhabitants, but not enough for them to be considered sub-villages. Other townland names consist mostly of pastureland with few residents and are rarely used in the local discourse about place.

Throughout the thesis, due to the multiplicity of conceptualisations of the 'place' of Doolin, I discuss it in various ways, generally calling it Doolin or 'the village', but specifying 'Killilagh' or 'the parish' when necessary. Part of the thrust of this thesis, too, is to illustrate the fluid connections between Doolin, its northwest Clare surroundings and indeed the rest of the world. As I will illustrate, tourism, driven originally by the strength of the local traditional Irish music scene, has in fact essentialised the notion of "Doolin" out of a more amorphous conception.

Today, Doolin's economy is largely dependent on summertime tourism. Around fifty B&Bs dot the parish. Four hostels and three campsites within the village also cater to tourists. There are three pubs, two in Roadford and one in Fisherstreet. All of them have expanded significantly over the last few decades to make room for the burgeoning tourist crowds that come to hear a session of traditional Irish music. The main section of Fisherstreet has been completely transformed even since the 1970s. Now, every building along this streetscape functions, at least in part, as a business geared towards tourism, including O'Connor's Pub, four gift/craft shops, a B&B and a restaurant.



**Figure 1.6:** Cattle and B&Bs

This is not to say that the parish's only source of income is from tourism. Indeed, it is a mixed economy. Although not dealt with to any great extent in the following thesis, farming remains an important part of the local economy, and an important part of the local culture. It is a mixed economy which is to say that many residents who run tourist-oriented

businesses are also farmers. (And even those who in no way depend on agriculture sometimes keep a few cows "because it's nice"). While tourism is

<sup>6</sup> Lough, in the bottom left corner of the parish (see map page 106), is where Conrad Arensberg spent part of his time doing fieldwork in the 1930s. The folklorist, Delargy, had recently been there collecting stories and songs from the locals (Arensberg 1959:20), which suited Arensberg's desire to "find something of the old tradition still alive" (*ibid.*:22).

highly profitable, it is also highly seasonal, and maintaining a farm becomes one way to secure one's household income. Even those farmers who do not have tourist oriented businesses are small-holders due primarily to the rough terrain of the parish. Beef-cattle are the primary farming resource and pastureland blankets all parts of the parish, including even the most heavily touristed areas. Less commonly, sheep are kept by some, and many farmers keep a few horses. Donkeys and goats are also kept but only in very small numbers. In the summertime, manure is spread over the pastures, silage is made and hay is 'saved', bundled into large, black plastic-wrapped bales for winter feed. Cultivation occurs only at the subsistence level in the form of gardens where potatoes, onions, carrots, and cabbage are grown. Most farming today is heavily mechanised, but some smallholders still rake hay into haycocks.

The agricultural nature of the parish is one of its predominant features, in terms of both the landscape and many of the people who live there. It communicates itself to the visitor through every sense<sup>7</sup>. The smell of manure-spreading in the early summer and the smell of freshly cut hay later on perfumes the air. (But like all things, even the smell in the air is seasonal. In the wintertime, the wind and rain off the Atlantic tinge the air with a sweet saltiness). In the summertime, as various fields mature and the hay is cut and baled, the parish begins to resemble a patchwork quilt. Tractors rumble back and forth down all of the roads that run through the parish, even the 'main' roads. Cattle are moved from one field to another along these roads as well, and it is common for all cars, buses and coach-tours to have to wait in traffic for a herd of cattle to make their way to a new pasture, prodded along by a patient farmer in Wellington boots wielding a walking stick. Cattle low complainingly in bad weather and fill the air with their noise. After the sounds of tourism (coaches, crowds and accents), the sound of cattle and horses was one of the first major sensory impressions I had of Doolin. Indeed, there seemed to be a stark, dichotomous contrast between the sounds of tourism along the main part of Fisherstreet and Roadford and the sounds of agriculture and ocean everywhere else.

Unsurprisingly, fishing used to be the main economic resource of the residents of Fisherstreet, but today, only a small few fishermen still launch boats from Doolin. The pier at the sea has now been largely appropriated by the tourist economy. There, the ferry companies run tourists back and forth from the Aran Islands in huge numbers during the summer months<sup>8</sup>. Fishing has become a much more regulated and difficult occupation in Ireland in general in the last few decades, and the fishermen that operate out of Doolin, do so out of handmade,

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<sup>7</sup> For an interesting discussion on the multisensory nature of fieldwork, see Kohn 1994.

<sup>8</sup> The tensions created by the ferry companies' appropriation of the publicly owned pier at Doolin are significant and important, but are not dealt with extensively in this thesis. It is a controversial topic that warrants future analysis.



motor-powered fishing boats called *currachs*. They are small, subsistence operations, and in the face of much more profitable incomes in other sectors, fishing has declined significantly in recent times. However, like farming, fishing remains an important symbolic identifier, and Doolin is often still described as a small 'fishing village'.

Peat turf and coal are commonly used as heating fuel in the wintertime. Peat *riks*, stacks of peat 'bricks' carefully crafted into a water-tight pile, stand to the side of people's houses. While peat-cutting is mechanised today, families that use peat often still go to the bog themselves in June and July to 'turn' it and 'foot' it (in order to let the sun and wind dry it out), and then haul it themselves at the end of the summer.



**Figure 1.7:** Salmon fishing

On the surface, the lifeworld of northwest Clare is a stark mixture of the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. Some people are wealthy, drive expensive cars and live in big new suburban-American style homes, while next door, others live without central heating in old stone cottages. Like Brody (1973), it would be easy to conclude that 'old Ireland' is in decline and that a 'new Ireland' is on the rise. I choose not to take such a black-and-white view of things, but this is not to say that the contrast between the lifestyle and the habitus of the generations is not dramatic. Irish culture has changed radically in the last

thirty years and a new wealth has been created more recently. This has had a huge effect on the worldview of the younger generations especially, to the point that some people say that grandchildren and grandparents live in two different cultures.

This thesis explores some aspects of change in one place in Ireland and in particular reference to tourism and traditional Irish music, but more work needs to be done in other areas. One important aspect that might be looked at in detail in future studies in northwest Clare is the relationship between the farming and



tourism economies, modelled after Peace's work on economic and cultural 'domains' in Inveresk (2001). Doolin has a fairly marked tourist domain which is opposed to its farming domain, and by focusing on the former, this thesis largely excludes the latter. A general focus on the changing family life and the generations would be timely as well, and more specifically, work on changing gender relations would add to our understanding of a changing Ireland.

### Methodology

This thesis is largely based on fourteen months of fieldwork conducted from June of 2002 to September 1, 2003. It must be said at the outset that this thesis reflects my own perspective, experiences and interactions at a particular time. Others might have created a very different picture of Doolin, based on different experiences, different social relations in the village, different interviews, different archival materials, and different theoretical and topical foci. Time marches on, and things become altered. Recent correspondence with my friends in Doolin reveals that the Doolin I describe here has already changed. Therefore, in no way do I consider the following thesis the complete ethnographic account of Doolin, since it is situated in time, and since its concern is topically associated with the interplay between tourism and traditional Irish music. More in depth analyses of, for example, the relationship between the farming economy and the tourist economy would be useful avenues for future research.

Participant observation formed a large part of my fieldwork. Rebecca and I both worked part-time throughout the time we lived in Doolin. Those experiences working in a B&B and a shop (in Rebecca's case) and in a pub (and for a very short time on a building site) in my case, were invaluable. As I have pointed out in detail elsewhere (Kaul 2004), far from detracting from my fieldwork, employment was an enriching way to do participant observation. It gave us a public role in the village, and gave us intimate access to some of the most prominent aspects of the tourist interaction with the locale. Working as a barman at one of the village's three pubs was especially advantageous for me for three main reasons. First, in a community with a church, a community centre and three pubs, the pubs acted as a total social environment especially in the wintertime, and not merely drinking establishments. This gave me exposure to the permanent residents of Doolin, and it forced me to learn the intricacies of local social relations very quickly. Secondly, it provided a perfect perch from which I could observe the tourist-musical



**Figure 1.8:** The author at work



interaction because it is at the pubs where sessions primarily occur. Thirdly, my position put me directly in the path of the tourist and indeed forced a daily interaction.

Hosting a few family and friends towards the end of the fieldwork also afforded me a unique opportunity to do *intensive* participant observation amongst a small number of tourists along the travelling tourist-site, complementing my other, more *extensive* observations of tourist behaviours amongst 'strangers' passing through Doolin.

For the summer months of 2002 and 2003 we rented a room in a house shared with other incomers. From September 1, 2002 to June 1, 2003 Rebecca and I rented a whole house just outside Killilagh parish in a townland called *Ballyfaudeen*, an agricultural landscape sprawled across the backs of the Cliffs of Moher. The mundane activities of life—work, keeping house, visiting friends and neighbours, practising music with friends, and hanging out at the pubs—provided endless opportunities for participant observation as well.

Part of my participant observation was specifically musical. For a few months in the autumn of 2002, I took mandolin lessons from a resident Breton banjo-player. With the patient assistance from herself and others, I began to learn Irish dance tunes throughout the rest of our stay. Though I am a novice



**Figure 1.9:** The author and his wife 'giving a song'

mandolin-player, learning tunes and discussing their nature with other musicians expanded my knowledge of this music immeasurably. Rebecca and I also play our own music on guitar, and occasionally, if asked, we would sing songs during afternoon or evening sessions. (Rebecca was particularly known around the village for her singing

voice). Eventually, we even had our own 'gig' in a pub in a neighbouring town that hosts all sorts of music, not just 'traditional'. Playing music provided another 'excuse' to talk to musicians, it provided credibility to our status amongst musicians, and it allowed me to play Irish dance tunes with other musicians in their homes. I recorded music as well, and some samples accompany this thesis which are referred to throughout the text in the following manner: (See track 4).

The other important aspect of my fieldwork consisted of interviews with the owners of accommodations, publicans and their employees, tourists, working-tourists, established musicians, learning musicians, local people renowned for

their 'auld stories' and basically anyone who was willing to talk to me. Most of these interviews were recorded on a Sony minidisc recorder, but in the case of many of my interactions with tourists especially, I wrote brief notes. Interviews were generally open in the sense that I never used a standard questionnaire. Most times, I started with a few key questions to get a conversation moving, but allowed the interviews to take their own course, only relying on the questions if an issue became exhausted. These interviews were primarily topical. I conducted a number of life-history interviews as well, some of which took many interviews over many months. I found life-histories to be an enriching way to characterise the changes that have occurred over the last few generations, giving a personal face to larger processes.

I fully expected that Gaelic would be spoken to at least a certain degree in the field, and in anticipation of this, Rebecca and I took weekly language classes at the Tyneside Irish Centre for nine months before entering the field. When we first visited on our exploratory trip, I enquired about continuing my lessons with the proprietor of our B&B who told us she spoke Gaelic. She looked at me quizzically at this request, and when we moved there, I realised why. Northwest Clare is no longer a *gaeltacht* (an area where Gaelic is spoken as a first language). The last local who spoke Gaelic had died a number of years before our arrival, and it turns out that our B&B proprietor from our first visit was an incomer from another area. Still, I expected that some kind of insider-outsider divisions would fall along linguistic lines, even if it wasn't the first language spoken. But again, I was wrong. Despite the fact that some older villagers still "have a bit of Irish", it is not regularly spoken even amongst themselves. School children are required to take Irish Gaelic classes, but again, it is not spoken. For them, it is primarily a curricular activity. The Aran Islanders speak Gaelic as a first language, and their regular contact with Doolin creates an opportunity for some villagers to practise their Irish, but most often, the Islanders spoke English in Doolin. Even the songs that are sung during sessions were sung in English. Thinking about it now, I cannot even recall a single instance when Irish was used as the language of song.

This is not say that Gaelic is nowhere to be found. Almost every road sign is bilingual. The names of villages, pubs, townlands, and local place names are most often Gaelic. And the average citizen knows enough Irish to be able to translate terms and phrases into English. If Gaelic is not spoken anymore, it is certainly written, read and translated through these naming practices. A few Irish words regularly pepper everyday speech like the *trá* (beach) or *gansey*<sup>9</sup> (jumper or sweater). Civil servants are still called by their Irish names (the

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<sup>9</sup> *Gansey* is an interesting word which refers to an Irish wool sweater. The term originally came into Irish from the English word Guernsey, as in the Isle of Guernsey. It was in Guernsey, not Ireland that the now famous "Aran Island Sweater" originates.



*Gardaí* or police, and the *Taoiseach* or Prime Minister, are prime examples). More importantly, the pronunciations and the grammatical distinctiveness of spoken 'Hiberno-English' (more commonly called the 'Irish brogue') in the area are clearly influenced by Gaelic. For example, the fact that one would "have a bit of Irish" derives from the proclivity in Gaelic to describe how songs, language, and other abilities are not inscribed in an individual, but rather, as if the individual has merely borrowed them from some larger collective tradition. Likewise, inserting the word "after" in a sentence (as in "I'm just after serving that man a pint and now he wants another") derives from the Gaelic usage of *tar eis* ("after") to emphasise an action which was taken recently. In terms of the pronunciation of the Irish words that are still spoken, there does exist a *kind* of insider-outsider dichotomy. When someone struggles with complex Irish spellings for example, it becomes obvious that they are not Irish. International incomers who stay indefinitely often pick up enough Irish to pronounce names correctly and to understand the few words and phrases that are still in use, thus becoming linguistically marked as insiders. Needless to say however, a full comprehension of spoken Irish was (unfortunately) not necessary to conduct my fieldwork and my introductory knowledge of the language quickly became just a tool to pronounce Irish words with a modicum of correctness.

Tourist populations are mobile and ever-shifting. To get accurate data on who the tourists were, where they were from, what they were doing there, and some of their impressions of Doolin and its music, I realised that some quantitative methodology would be required. Fortunately, since the national and regional tourist boards like to track even minute changes in their 'market', extensive national and regional quantitative data already exists on tourists. Locally, a survey had been conducted in 2001 by the Doolin Tourism Co-operative in which 149 respondents returned questionnaires. All of these surveys have been invaluable in my research, and helped me construct a survey of my own which was distributed to local B&Bs, campsites, hostels and restaurants over a two and a half month period between June and August of 2003. 159 questionnaires were returned, and a great deal of the information in chapter 5 is a result of this data<sup>10</sup>.

Archival work was also carried out at the Local Studies Centre in Ennis, County Clare. Their extensive and detailed records about the county were invaluable.

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<sup>10</sup> Language is an issue with any data set dealing with tourists as well given their international origins. A serious flaw in the survey material that I gathered was that questionnaires were written in English only. While presumably many tourists travelling to English speaking nations have some working knowledge of English, it is a flaw that could be corrected in future research.

### **Conceptual Organisation and Underlying Influences**

The intertwined and complex relationship between tourism and traditional Irish music runs like a thread through the following pages, but conceptually this thesis is organised into three dimensions<sup>11</sup> which are sometimes dealt with in order and sometimes simultaneously. The first dimension is chronological. The thesis starts with a broadly painted backdrop and finishes in the present. I begin with history, or rather, the 'remembered history' of local people. For me, the maxim that we cannot understand the present unless we know the past is not merely good advice; I take it quite literally. The past is lived in the present in two ways. First, the meanings that people ascribe to events in the present are always couched in the understanding that they have of notions of 'tradition' and of past events. This is true for local people, but since the local remembered history is often sought out and learned by many incomers, modern events are referenced by the local past for blow-ins as well. Secondly, modern social structures, expressive culture, or political policy are shaped by precedent. In the field, and later, I found that by asking the question "what is this?" I was implicitly asking a simultaneous question: "how did this come about?" I don't think this is a personal idiosyncrasy of mine, however. Doolin, like any place, is steeped in its own dramatic history. To explain the complexity of today is to dip back into remembered history, and this is where the thesis begins conceptually.

For the present analysis, three historical periods are particularly important, and chapters 2, 3, and 4 reflect the way in which people remember the past in relation to the music and the tourism. The 'auld days', the title of chapter 2, is a phrase locals often used when I asked them about the era before the 1960s, before the music was 'revived', and before visitors began to come in droves to the area. Chapter 3 deals with an era from the late 1960s to the mid-to-late 1980s when traditional Irish music underwent a massive 'revival' period. The 1960s ushered in a world-wide musical Folk Revival that rode on a larger wave of social change. The 'hippy generation' shed earlier 'traditional' values, viewing them as antiquated. In Doolin, this was part and parcel of the Revival of traditional music. Ironically, a 'traditional' music became part of a social casting-off of 'tradition', and in the context of Doolin, this was not cognitively dissonant. Doolin was one of a handful of localities in Ireland where the revival came home to roost. It was during the intensity of this era that the music and the tourism became inextricably linked in Doolin. Chapter 4 brings us into the most recent decade and a half and deals with another dramatic historical change: the emergent Celtic Tiger economy. Throughout, these chapters document important changes that occurred in the economy, the politics, and the musical life of

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<sup>11</sup> I see this organisation literally in 3-D as it were, not linearly.

northwest Clare while linking the connections between the local, the national and the international spheres in relation to these issues.

There are two important reasons to spend so much time on the 'history' of Doolin's development as a tourist destination and a 'musical mecca'. The first reason has already been outlined. In order to understand the Doolin of the present, it is absolutely necessary to understand the Doolins of the past. As Bruner wrote, "Life consists of retellings" (1986:12). This quickly became clear to me in the field as stories were told and people dipped back into the remembered past. Certain events, specific characters, and particular 'eras' began to form a sequential pattern of history, and I realised that these periods and the people who occupied them live on in today's social world. They shape current social understandings of what Doolin 'is' today. What's more, the complexity of the current social structure is best explained through this history since it was caused by it. The second point is this: in one sense, tourism and traditional Irish music have been deeply interconnected in Doolin and northwest Clare for nearly fifty years now. It would be easy to assume that modern mass tourism has invaded northwest Clare and simply changed this old, pure tradition of folk music, but this assumption would be wrong. There has been a long-standing historical interaction between visitors and the tradition of Irish music in northwest Clare. The following history, if successful, makes this unrecognised point.

The second organisational dimension in this thesis is an erratic narrowing of scope. Throughout the thesis we will increasingly close in on the session experience as it is expressed and understood in the present. History is broad. Economic and political processes have national and international origins, but cannot be ignored if we truly want to understand their local impact. I am committed to the notion that local places *interact* with global processes and are not merely acted *upon*, and therefore, this narrowing of scope is jagged and jerky at times. Via a chronological march through time, the scope of my attention goes back and forth from larger policies and trends to local reactions, and from local agency to global reactions. A smooth characterisation doesn't reflect the complications of reality, and I am more committed to reality than to presenting an ethnographic account that is harmoniously bound unto itself. Though I rarely mention him in the text of this thesis, Eric Wolf's work on the historic interconnectedness of cultures and nations (i.e., historic globalism) provides a theoretical undercurrent to this organisational tactic. In *Europe and the People Without History*, he wrote,

Concepts like "nation", "society", and "culture" name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding the names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back

into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding" (1997[1982]:3).

Being careful to place these "bundles of relationships" back into the field may be a messy process, but I have tried to be conscious throughout this thesis not to bind the lives of people in northwest Clare into the physicality of northwest Clare. As Wilson (1984:1) and others (Kockel and Ruane 1992:7) have pointed out, reifications of 'community' and social structure as bounded units of analysis are rife in the ethnography of Ireland. I would add that the important global-local interaction is not new, nor is it unidirectional. People have little control over their own neighbours' behaviours, much less national and international trends and policies. Despite this, local people have agency. Indeed, as we shall see, the actions of people at the local level sometimes have global ramifications.

In conceptualising global flows, I am also influenced by Arjun Appadurai's metaphor of "imaginary landscapes" (1996:31). He introduces the idea that modern, global finances, technologies, media, ethnic groups, and ideologies form worldwide 'landscapes' that cross national boundaries to form *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, etc. (*ibid.*:33). This is a useful way of conceptualising tourist flows, but also more particularly the modern trans-national, trans-ethnic consumption and propagation of traditional Irish music. In chapter 8, I modify his approach and describe the larger 'Tradition' of traditional Irish music as a *musiscape*.

By moving from the past to the present, and by closing in on the intimate experiential interactions surrounding the sessions in Doolin, this thesis passes through various interrelated domains in the lifeworld of the village, particularly, economics, politics, social structure and expressive culture. This is the third organisational dimension to the following thesis. This may seem to be a contradiction to the discussion above and my efforts to avoid reifying the notion of 'community' by hyper-analysing the local social, economic, and political structures. However, I suggest that we should not abandon the notion of 'structure' altogether when we avoid reifying it. These structures *do* exist in places like Doolin, but like the interaction between the local and the global, individual 'agents' interact with and influence the structure. If Wolf provides me with a (primarily intuitive) theoretical orientation towards history and the local-global interaction, then Bourdieu has influenced some of my thinking about the interplay between individuals and structures. On this topic, he wrote that,

practices can be accounted for only by relating the objective *structure* defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which this habitus is operating (2000[1972]:78, emphasis in original).

And that,

Practice always implies a cognitive operation, a practical operation of construction which sets to work, by reference to practical functions, systems of classification (taxonomies) which organize perception and structure practice (*ibid.*:97).

In other words, in our daily lifeworld, we are affected by extant social structures and classifications, and we also affect those structures and classifications. As theorists like Bourdieu have laboured to point out, neglecting agency for structure or structure for agency neglects the intricate interaction between the two.

Most of the following chapters begin with a wide socio-economic backdrop and then focus in more sharply on the interactions at a local level. As the thesis progresses from one chapter to the next, the overall scope narrows in on the more intimate interactions at a local level and their changing meanings. In chapters 5 and 6, the changes that occur in the local social structure, wrought by the historical trends documented in chapters 2, 3, and 4, are analysed in detail. Alfred Schutz's work on the 'phenomenology of social relations' has been another important influence on my thinking, especially his discussions about 'contemporaries' and 'consociates' (1970:170, 218-231). The levels of intimacy that one has with the occupants of a place determines one's experience, and his fine-grained, existential analysis of social relations informs much of my view about social life in Doolin.

Chapter 5 deals strictly with the tourist population and the nature of tourism in northwest Clare. Tourism is a relatively new phenomenon in Doolin, but its impact has been dramatic. Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the permanent residents of the village and highlights the fact that a huge grey area exists between the local residents and the tourists. As we shall see, incomers who were not born in the locale but who now permanently reside there, called 'blow-ins' in Ireland, have helped reshape the social and physical landscape of Doolin. However, inclusion into village life is not without conflict and negotiation.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 deal with how all of these changes affect the traditional Irish music as it is played and perceived by various actors in northwest Clare including tourists, musicians and permanent residents. On this topic, Victor Turner and his concern with the in-between categories, transformation, performance, and the experience of liminality, has always been an inspiration (Turner 1986, 1992). Chapter 7 takes a closer look at how globalising processes in general, and tourism in particular, have 'consolidated' traditional Irish music over time. Chapter 8 looks at how the blow-in population has all but totally

appropriated the traditional Irish music scene in Doolin. Ironically, this has passed with very little conflict or cognitive dissonance. To summarise my argument into a single sentence, this is possible for two reasons: Irish music is not, and never has been, coterminous with 'the Irish' or with the isle of Ireland, and furthermore, incomers who learn the music and play in Doolin's sessions become an asset to the community not a threat to it. Chapter 9 takes a step back from the finer-grained analyses in order to draw all of these seemingly disparate threads together and by addressing the important issues of globalisation and 'authenticity'.

It is important that the people we work with in the field are given a 'voice' in our writing. Our informants give us an account of their lives in interviews, and while we may couple these stories with quantitative methods, participant-observation, archival research, and comparative literature, without their input our interpretations would approach meaninglessness. Throughout this thesis, I attempt to let the people I talked to in Doolin tell their own story. It is, after all, their history and their village. In this regard, I was heavily influenced in my writing by the folklorist Henry Glassie who argued that we need to begin with the words of the people we study because,

They know. They will not have the culture reduced to a formula, ready to hand over, but the community will include people who can turn interviews into conversations, who can present its significant texts. These will not take the shape of philosophical treatises, and they may not even be verbal. They will emerge as recurrent actions recognized to compress most richly the essence of right thinking. By recording them exactly I will have the basis for study, created not by me but by them. I might interpret incorrectly, but the data will be inviolably right, and science will be served (1995[1982]:14).

I am therefore also influenced by his presentation of people's 'voices'. His "transcriptions are not designed to make stories look like prose or poetry, but to make them look like they sound. To that end the most important device is leaving white space on the page to signal silence" (1995[1982]:40). Glassie anticipated the narrative approach in the social sciences by including himself in 'the scene' of his interactions with his informants. Like Glassie, I present my informants' words as they said them to me, and whenever possible, I include the hedges, the spaces and the repetition of phrases in order to allow the reader to 'hear' their inflections and phrasing. Some of my informants are fast speakers whose words and thoughts flow in almost perfect sentence-paragraph formation. Some speakers use hedges to a greater or lesser degree. My Irish informants often punctuate their statements with "d'y'know" and attach "-like" to the last word at the end of a phrase to emphasise a point. Some natural storytellers

utilise pauses to a greater degree, and in the transcribed quotes herein, I try to be faithful to the way people speak. When quotes are cut down, which I have always hesitated to do, I use three dots ( ... ) to indicate this. However, I have been careful not to cut out phrases that would affect the meaning of the quote.

There are characters that the reader will meet throughout the thesis, some of whom march in and out of the pages with no further appearances. Others have more to say, and the reader will have the benefit of getting to know them a bit. Naturally, some of my informants were nervous about having their real names in print, and I have given them pseudonyms. Others expressly requested that their real names be used. I have respected both requests, but there's no need to indicate which names have been changed. On this issue, I feel that we must ask ourselves who we are protecting with pseudonyms: our informants or ourselves? A few of my informants in particular (and in fact the name 'Doolin' itself) are well-known and have been written about many times in the popular literature on Irish music as well as in tourist guidebooks. Giving them all pseudonyms would only protect myself, and further, it would be disrespectful to them to bury their words in a fake name that anyone could uncover. For these reasons, I have chosen, perhaps controversially, to take a mixed approach to the issue of name-changing. But my choices at every stage were to follow the requests of my informants first, to ask myself who I was protecting from whom (themselves from each other?, from potential tourists who may read this?, myself from ridicule when the Doolin people read this?), and when in doubt, to change the name.

In summary, the aim of this thesis is to present a particular kind of ethnography, one that is about a traditional Irish music scene in a particular place which is seasonally affected by a strong tourist economy. Today, the interaction between the tourism and the music has resulted in complex social restructuring and the build up of new commercial relationships. To understand that complexity, we have to first delve into the past.

## Chapter Two—The Auld Days

[T]he past is most fully experienced through everyday life in the present.

—Joanne Rappaport (1988:718)

[T]he tendency has been to make history less of an art and more of a pseudo-science, and hence for everyone in the profession to know 'more and more about less and less'.

—Norman Davies (1999:xxv)

### I.

#### **Introduction: History and Memory**

Doing fieldwork is like reading a kind of backwards history. Despite preparatory research, when we first enter a place, we learn its history by tracing present relationships back in time, unlike written histories that read neatly from past to present. Events in the past form patterns that shape today's social structures. We observe and learn what a place is 'about' and the relationships that make it work or not work. In order to understand those relationships, we find ourselves searching for chronological causality. We ask questions and receive stories that allow us to dip into a pool of remembered events which we can later understand sequentially. The first chapters of this thesis document a kind of history then, because history must be known in order to understand the present (Connerton 1989:2), and importantly, an individual's knowledge of the past helps create their "experience of the present" (*ibid.*).

There are always multiple ways to look at 'history'. The word has more than one meaning. There is the past itself, and the representation of the past by those who, in one way or another, call themselves 'historians' (Tonkin 1992:2; Le Goff 1992:107-108). Then, there is 'oral history', stories passed down by word of mouth. I would argue that history is lifeless if it is separated from the people who lived it, and it is through personal stories and accounts of the past that we come to truly understand a people's own history and how they understand it in the present. Furthermore, in order to understand a place's present one must not only understand its history but the telling of that history by the people who occupy it (Glassie 1995[1984]:59; Tonkin 1992:2). Obviously, we must outline history with documented facts, but census figures, news-clippings and the historical accounts of



gentrified travellers only provide the picture's frame. But it's the local people's history. They lived it and it surrounds their present. As Linstroth points out, some researchers are suspicious of personal historical narratives and wonder how much of the story is 'invented' in order to fit into a more desirable understanding of the present (2002:16), but there is no need to be suspicious if we listen closely and if we are careful researchers. Because people perceive the same past subjectively does not mean that it is somehow 'false' or would not fit into an objective framework. Others are less suspicious (cf. Dorson 1972, chapter 8, for a lengthy analysis of this debate). "Oral history is not intrinsically more or less likely to be accurate than a written document" argued Tonkin; "conventional literary historians have taken documents over-literally; documents, after all, are often orally recorded" (Tonkin 1992:113).

Overarching this debate about the multifarious definitions of 'history' and their worth, is the fact that there are always multiple historical 'stories'. The Doolin that exists today is largely the result of two converging histories, the history of tourism and the history of Irish traditional music, and how local people and people abroad reacted to their emergent patterns. These two histories—separate at first, but later converging into one larger, more complex pattern—do not always share the same 'events'. Nor do they always pull the same people into significance. Nor are these histories even purely about the same places. Sometimes, national or international events created local patterns while other times, local events created national and international patterns. It is important to carefully contextualise our field(s) in all cases, but in Ireland especially, there has been a history of loose academic contextualisation (Kockel and Ruane 1992:7). It is part of my intention in this thesis to very carefully place the social interactions and the social relationships that I describe in their proper contexts. There is an intimate interaction between the local and the global in the following history.

Historical change is not simply a tide that sweeps people along. People play active roles. We are conscious agents reacting to our changing social environment, and though much influenced by the 'order of the day', we certainly can, and do, influence that order, if only, as is often the case, at a relatively local level. In their own ways and with their own motives and reasoning, individuals from Doolin did influence the histories we will be examining.

As we shall see in chapter 3, a new and intense interest in traditional Irish music came to Doolin and rural northwest Clare in the late 1960s. The musicians of northwest Clare gave their music back to this new swell of visitors with an equal intensity. They played sincerely and in their particularly Clare style, but they also embraced the change, the new attention they were given, this 'Revival'. Doolin

changed because of the Revival, but the Doolin people—and not just the musicians and the publicans—created a particularly rich and welcoming context for the expression of the Revival of traditional Irish music. Their behaviour, their agency, sometimes through conscious decisions and calculated risks, weaved its way into a larger historical tapestry. Sometimes, it wasn't action, but a simple aspect of personal character that changed this place and this music. In other words, historical change comes to us, but sometimes we are more than capable of changing history. First however, we must explore the world that was changed.

Depending on the context of a conversation and the speaker who uses it, the 'auld days' is a phrase that can refer to many different 'eras', but I use it here to label a time before the 1960s when a very different way of life existed in northwest Clare: modern, mass-tourists had not arrived yet, the Catholic Church dominated daily life, emigration and poverty still haunted rural Ireland, and Irish customs and traditions, including traditional Irish music, were often seen as reminders of poverty and insularity. This view of Ireland was darkly represented in works like John

Messenger's *Inis Beag* (1969), Hugh Brody's *Change & Decline in the West of Ireland* (1973) and Schepher-Hughes' *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* (1979). People were poor and the prospects for



**Figure 2.1:** A depiction of the Auld Days in a Doolin pub

radical economic development looked bleak. The depression was economic and emotional. A cultural and religious conservatism created an oppressive hegemony that carefully policed individual's behaviour.

Other researchers such as Arensberg & Kimball in *Family and Community* (1968[1940]) depicted life differently though, and saw well-structured, well-functioning 'communities'. Northwest Clare had largely maintained local traditions and the Gaelic language in spite this poverty and hegemony, and a simple but effective subsistence economy persisted that allowed people to live mostly without hard cash. A system of generalised reciprocity and a strong sense of community endured.



Of course, in retrospect, we can see the theoretical and conceptual shortcomings that these authors made about Ireland. As Wilson demonstrated, all of these works utilised similar conceptions of 'community' and 'kinship' to either bolster a structural-functionalist argument or to tear it down (1984:1). On the other hand, we should also be able to understand why they presented Irish culture in the manner that they did. Life during the auld days was described to me by the people who lived through them in terms that Arensberg, Kimball, Brody, Messenger, and Schepher-Hughes would *all* agree on. It was lovely. It was harsh. It was worse. It was better. There was a strong sense of community. Society was falling apart at the seams. All true to the people who lived life then and remember it now.

## II.

### The Socio-Economic Backdrop

#### The Space of a Few Cows

Northwest Clare is cattle country, and became more so following the famine (Byrne *et al* 2001:VI). The ground is too stony for much cultivation. Indeed northwest Clare is dominated by the Burren, a mountainous exposed-limestone landscape<sup>1</sup>. The Burren seems to be a landscape stripped of all plant-life and fertility, but in fact, the opposite is true. The rich grasses that grow between the

limestone 'pavements' are fantastic for cattle grazing, and Burren cattle are prized throughout Ireland. Killilagh Parish, on the southern borders of The Burren, is richer than the starkest Burren landscape, but it is still stony ground and no good for intensive cultivation. It is perfect though for cattle grazing. A quick glance through the 1901 Census of county



**Figure 2.2:** Haycocks

Clare reveals that farming is listed for roughly one half of the working population's "occupation".<sup>2</sup> ("1901 Census of Clare – Killilagh DED"). The farms around northwest Clare are predominantly what Arensberg and Kimball would call "small

<sup>1</sup> When local people describe the Burren they like to use a quote often credited to Cromwell: "There aren't trees enough to hang a man, water enough to drown him, nor soil enough to bury him."

<sup>2</sup> This excludes those listed as school children, but includes those whose occupation is listed as "farmer's son" or daughter, "farmer's wife", or "farm labourer"

farms"—family run affairs with relatively low acreage and a concentration on subsistence rather than profits (1940[1968]:3-4). Arensberg and Kimball provide a detailed ethnographic description life for the small farmer and his family in Clare in the 1930s which I won't reproduce here. Essentially, though, this was a 'peasant' economy in the sense that people lived relatively self-sufficiently, satisfying most of their own needs. Even though they had very little money, they weren't necessarily 'poor'. Gus O'Connor described it to me:

Everyone had their own produce, their own firing peat. So they were self-sufficient. When I was a young fellow, we never had to buy a vegetable. We had the turf for heating and all kinds of potatoes and veg and cabbage.

I replied,

So people didn't *make* a lot of money, but they didn't *need* a lot of money.

He agreed:

They didn't need a lot of money, you know. No. Probably your *clothes* would be the most expensive. Your clothes and shoes...

After a pause, I ventured a guess:

It's a strange thing, actually, because in a *way*, Doolin is *thriving* now, but in *another* way, it was thriving *before* as well. Just in a different way.

He concurred with my assessment:

It *was*, you know. I try to *explain* that to people. They couldn't understand it. Even in the bad times, Doolin were well-off, *most* of them. They had very good land around, the farmers. They produced cattle. And the old people, they made their own butter, their own turf, their own potatoes, their own veg. They were almost self-sufficient. Except you had to pay rates to the council. And whatever other incidentals might be needed. Like shoes and clothes. But other than that, there was no poor person that *I* knew of. No. None whatsoever.

### **The Argonauts of the Eastern Atlantic**

The hamlet in Doolin called Fisherstreet was aptly named. It was a single street of houses where many of the fishing families lived. The 1901 Census shows that almost exactly half the working population defined their "occupation" as either

"fisherman" or "fish dealer" ("1901 Census of Clare – Killilagh DED"). It's a well-chosen, sheltered spot that still largely protects it from the worst that the Atlantic has to offer, but it's close to the seashore. Doolin's fishing fleet was never as big as some Clare fishing villages, but fishing was always an important economic activity. I was told by 87 year-old Seamus,

The fishermen that was down below, they made a *fair-good living* by the sea that time. There was about eight or nine people fishing there, out of Doolin when I was a young fella. And in the *summertime*, they'd make a fair bit of money out of mackerel fishing. And then they had the *spring* fishing, and the *harvest* fishing.

Because of their fishing fleet and their proximity, the Doolin people always maintained a close personal and economic relationship with the Aran Islanders. That relationship continues, albeit in a changed form, today. Jamesie, a local fisherman, told me about his ancestors' relationship with the Islanders. He said,

This house here, it was all Gaelic that was spoken, because my grandfather-like, he would be spending a lot of time with *Aranochs*. *Aranochs* is the Irish for "islander", the people from the Islands—the Aran Islands: Inisheer, Inishmaan and Inishmor...

I used to go with my grandfather and my uncles and that, and my own father-like when they'd be going off gettin' *poteen* and stuff like that... He used to have *bonards*, young pigs, small pigs, and he used to bring them across to the Islands.

And he used to sell the pigs on the Islands.

And he used to row across by *currach*, a small little *currach* across. Which is what? Six, seven miles. And then he'd sell off the pigs there and then head off again the next morning.

And he'd go away across from there to The Connemara, which was thirty miles straight across the bay. And he'd pick up *poteen*.

We had relations in Connemara.

He'd pick up the *poteen* in Connemara, and then he would turn around—of course, after he'd stayed there a night or two, said "hello" to the lot of them, and drank enough for two because he was fond of the drink himself—and then he'd come back to the Islands, and deliver off some *poteen* at the Islands on the way back. And then bring the rest of the *poteen* back here. And sell it off here as well.

"And start all over", I said.

"And start all over again. Well, he was fishing between as well."

In those days, economic relationships were also personal ones. These relationships between the Islanders and the Doolin people continue today, although they continue for very different reasons, tourism taking precedence over the trade of pigs, fish and *poteen*. The summer ferry services that run from Doolin to the Aran Islands ensure that an economic relationship is maintained. Indeed, the fact that Doolin is the nearest ferry port to Inisheer may highlight the relationship between the people of Inisheer and Doolin over other communities in northwest Clare, especially today when the professional ferry services act as the major means of transportation, not the *currachs* of the auld days.

Personal relationships continue as well. A Doolin couple we got to know are the godparents to the children of their friends from Inisheer. In turn, the same privileged responsibility was conferred upon the couple from Inisheer for the Doolin couple's children. Other relationships like this exist, relationships of friendship, responsibility and obligation. On one trip to Inisheer, an Islander, after finding out that we lived in Doolin, bottled up some water from a holy well on the Island for us to deliver to a Doolin friend. Another time, Jamesie took me out to Inisheer in his *currach*. He was greeted by every third person, and after we settled into Tigh Ned's Pub, he gave me money to go to the bar to order 'his round' of drinks, which was very much against the sophisticated rules of drinking. I asked why he was suddenly breaking this rule. He informed me that if he approached the bar, two or three drinks would be bought for him by his Islander friends. He wouldn't be allowed to protest. This would result in a 'serious round' of drinks and we would never get back to the mainland!

I am not implying, by any means, that this is an Irish version of the Trobriander Kula Ring described by Malinowski (1966[1922]). My subtitle is primarily an anthropological pun. On the other hand, there are parallels. The economic relationship is necessary and desirable. But like the complex relationships developed in the Kula trade, underlying the economic ties between Doolin and the Aran Islands is a more personal relationship between friends and fictive kin.

### **Seasonality**

Economies such as this require that people take work wherever they can get it, and when there was no farming or fishing to be done, other jobs were taken up. The local fishermen were not just suppliers of hooch when no fish could be had. Seamus told me what else they did.



In the wintertime, they'd be breaking *stones* for the *roads*. And they be getting so much for every tonne of stones they break.

Now when the month of April and May come, those fishermen'd be putting up *kelp*. You know what *kelp* is? They'd be putting up the seaweed. And they'd *burn* it... And they'd export it from Liscannor in the boat. That boat might've come in with a cargo of *coal* into *Liscannor*—which is only a couple 5 or 6 miles down the *road*. There was a couple of merchants in Ennistymon that'd take the whole cargo of *coal*. And she wouldn't be going back *empty*. She'd maybe be goin back with a load of *kelp* maybe. Or maybe she'd bring a load of flags[stones] from the Moher and Doonagore Quarries. See.

I asked for clarification,

So even the fishermen at that time had to supplement their fishing with all kinds of work in the wintertime?

He replied,

Oh they had. *Definitely. Definitely.* They might have no *land*. They might have the place of one cow. And that's the very *most* they had."

Supplementing ones' income was (and is) common due to the seasonality of available work. During the years of World War II, Seamus told me, a phosphate mine opened up in Doolin and supported an employment base of around 700 men. African phosphate, used to create fertilisers, was no longer available to Irish farmers but it happened to be naturally abundant around Doolin. The income from the mines created something of an economic boom in Doolin and indeed all around northwest Clare. As a result, the pubs did good business, especially McDermott's on the Roadford side of the village, and bakeries and other shops opened up. This lasted for nine years until the mines closed down in 1948.



**Figure 2.3:** 'Footing' turf

Despite the recent shift from a farming to a tourist economy today, as in the auld days, seasonality still underlies all aspects of life in northwest Clare, resulting in a mixed economy very similar to the one described by Brody (1973:18-44). The



**Figure 2.4:** A *rík* of turf

farming calendar still begins on St. Bridget's Day (February 1<sup>st</sup>) when crops are planted and fields are prepared for cattle pasturage. In May or June or whenever the bogs dry out from the winter rains, turf is cut. The turf used to be cut with a *sleán* (pro. "shlon") shovel by hand. Today it is machine-cut. But still, after cutting the turf 'sticks', it is laid out to dry in the sun, and is later turned, stacked ('footed'), and hauled home. Fishing

for crab, lobster, and salmon begins when the weather becomes suitable in May or June and continues until September or October when the seas get too rough. In May, silage is cut, and in the summer months that follow, hay is cut and raked into haystacks (or today, mostly baled and wrapped in black plastic). Cattle are herded from pasture to pasture by farmers wielding walking sticks. In September, the crops from the gardens are harvested and stored. In August and September, pigs were killed, salted and smoked. (Today, the butcher supplies the pork, but it remains a staple). Preparations for wintertime are made then in October and November. Cattle are brought in, and the ditches and dykes around the pastures are cleaned out. Generally, the regular working season ends for farmers and fishermen in November, and all is idle and fallow until February. In the auld days, supplementary work in the stone quarries around Doolin helped sustain the local people.

In 1901, census records document a large number of "quarrymen". Other occupations included publican, postman, blacksmith, shepherd, herdsman, domestic servant, "general labourer", nurse, beggar, tailor, and teacher, among others ("1901 Census



**Figure 2.5:** Winter fields



**Figure 2.6:** Summer evening



of Clare – Killilagh DED”). What is abundantly clear is that tourism was in no way an important part of the economy of the parish. Unusually for this era, tourism *was* essential in neighbouring parishes, however.

### III.

#### **Tourism in County Clare after 1859—On the Origin of a New Species**

Although the first recorded tourist came to County Clare in 1749, very few people travelled there at all—for holiday or for business—before the mid-1800s. As Brian Ó Dálaigh wrote, “Most visitors avoided the county altogether” (1998:v). Clare is surrounded on three sides by water and extremely poor roads disallowed the use of wheeled carriages. During the 1800s, “visits to Ireland became standard enough for touristic responses to be organised” (Byrne *et al* 2001:XIV). For all intents and purposes, tourism came into existence in Clare in 1859 when a railroad line opened up from Limerick, just south of Clare, to Ennis. The line was both inexpensive and (relatively) fast. A few years later, a steam-ship from Galway began a service to Ballyvaughan in the north of the county, and from there, travellers often visited Lisdoonvarna. Eventually, three major travel routes developed through County Clare. One followed the railroad line through the centre of the county from Limerick up to Ennis and then further north to Gort. A second commonly used corridor roughly followed the Shannon River as it made its way along the eastern and southern borders of the county from Scariff to Killaloe and down to Limerick. The third corridor that developed, and the one that concerns us most here, follows the western coastline up from Kilrush and Kilkee up to Miltown Malbay, Lahinch, the Cliffs of Moher, and north to Ballyvaughan (*ibid.*:v-vii).

The nature of tourism from 1859 through the end of the Second World War was very different from the tourism which followed. Holiday-making in the late 1800s and early 1900s was largely undertaken by the upper classes, people who were “able to afford the costly time-consuming and bone-aching journeys to the coast for long periods in the summer season” (Walvin 1978:70). Class differentiation is therefore a key characteristic of tourism in Victorian times, a characteristic that distinguishes it from the more democratic mass-tourism that began following the Second World War.

Three locales in County Clare figured on the holiday map for early Victorian tourists. Kilkee is situated in the southern part of County Clare, but given the modes of transport and the poor quality of roads in Clare, Kilkee’s Victorian tourist industry wouldn’t have had much influence on Doolin. Lisdoonvarna and Lahinch,

however, were in the north, very nearby. A Lisdoonvarna publican, Peter Curtin, told me,

You're looking at very up-market, very uppity, landed gentry-type people [coming] to Lisdoonvarna to sample the waters. Very luxurious hotels out in the sticks, as it were. The common people, the ordinary folks, were merely servants.

Lahinch was and is a resort town. It has a classically beautiful, wide sandy beach with fantastic views that drew wealthy Victorian holiday makers (Ó Dálaigh 1998:279). The establishment of the West Clare Railway line made travelling here even more popular and accessible. In 1892, a golf course was established at Lahinch by a Lieutenant from the Black Watch Regiment and a Limerick businessman, and Lahinch's Victorian tourist industry became two-pronged overnight ([www.lahinchgolf.com](http://www.lahinchgolf.com)). Lisdoonvarna, also known colloquially as 'The Spa' or 'Lisdoon', plays a more central role in Doolin's history because of its proximity—only a few kilometres inland from Doolin. Tourism played an important role in Lisdoonvarna's historical development and still plays an important role in its modern economy. In the auld days, Lisdoon drew Victorian tourists for a very different reason than Lahinch. Natural springs infused with sulphur and minerals attracted people looking to 'take the waters' even in the early 1800s.

Doolin people would have encountered these tourists as they travelled passed on their way to the Cliffs of Moher, to the seaside, or to 'take the waters' in Lisdoonvarna. However, it wasn't until much later that tourists took anything more than a passing interest—literally—in Doolin itself.

Shortly after WWII, the commercial usage of an airport on the County Clare side of the Shannon River halfway between Limerick City and Ennis opened the door for a new era in tourism, not only for County Clare, but for all of the west of Ireland. In 1944, the US signed an agreement with Ireland stating that *all* commercial flights entering Irish airspace were required to stop at Shannon. The first flight passed through in 1945, and the concept of 'Duty Free Shopping' was invented there in 1947 (Deegan and Dineen 1997:13-14). Between 1947 and 1958 Shannon was being used as a stop-over by almost one half of all trans-Atlantic flights (Ó Gráda 1997:183). By 1959 though, trans-Atlantic flights began from other European destinations, and "Shannon Airport was, strictly speaking, already obsolescent" (*ibid.*). Still, the airport quickly transformed the potential for tourism in the west of Ireland and had already made an important impact. One traveller, writing in 1948,

had already noticed the tremendous impact that the airport was having on the region.

From being a quiet little hamlet, Ennis has become the most prosperous place in all Ireland... The inhabitants of Ennis benefit in many ways from their unique position. Every room in the little town was taken, and sixty new houses were being built... the local shops were doing a roaring trade in Irish tweeds, Irish shirts, Irish ties, and Irish souvenirs of every description. The bars were doing a roaring trade too... The American aircrews certainly had a wonderful time at Ennis. They wore very colourful clothes, usually red plaid shirts over their trousers. They were very fond of saying: 'Top o' the morning to ye!' and 'Begorra!'—expressions only used by stage Irishmen. (Charles Graves as quoted by Ó Dálaigh 1998:343-344).

This was certainly a far cry from the type of tourism that Clare had become used to during the previous century. Here was the beginning of mass-tourism, more accessible to all classes. From Ennis, it wasn't uncommon for travellers to make their way to Lahinch (*ibid.*) or other destinations even closer to Doolin like the Cliffs of Moher. Suddenly, tourism officials considered County Clare a "top-flight destination" (Deegan and Dineen 1997:17). This tourist activity that began skirting around Doolin in the auld days was, like everything else in northwest Clare, seasonal. The weather always dictated the seasonality of tourism, and this remains true today. Summer is the time for sun, work and tourism. Winter is the time for rain, fallow fields and quiet.

### **Doolin on the Periphery**

It wouldn't be for at least another decade that tourists finally started having a direct impact on Doolin itself. However, locals would have felt the peripheral effects of Lisdoonvarna's popularity. "When they came to Lisdoonvarna", Peter Curtin said, "they used to go to the Cliffs of Moher on coach trips, on horse-drawn carriages... and around [to] different sight-seeing tours." The main road that leads from Lisdoonvarna to the Cliffs of Moher passes directly through Doolin. Conrad Arensberg lived along a section of that road overlooking the main portions of Doolin when he did his fieldwork there in 1933. He wrote that it was common to see "Pleasure-bent motorists from the cities driv[ing] through along [to] the cliffs" (1937[1959]:21). Seamus Ennis records that as early as 1945, people were travelling from Lisdoonvarna to bathe in the sea at Doolin Point: "We were sitting in a canvas *currach* in the bay... ", he wrote, "watching the swimmers from Lisdoonvarna in case

of a drowning accident – twenty sidecars came out to Miss Murphy's<sup>3</sup> for tea, with four people each, and most of them went swimming" (quoted in Bourke 1986:54). In other words, as far as its *own* tourist industry, "Doolin didn't feature on the map at all", Peter told me. Later on however, long after the crowds of Victorian visitors had gone, a local, domestic flow of visitors created, what Peter called the "absolute embryonic stage" of tourism in Doolin:

In the 60s, there was public transport... Buses would do three runs a day, return to Doolin from Lisdoonvarna. For *two old pence*—a return trip for adults, and a penny for kids... We're talking about cheap, cheap fares. So people went down on the bus. They went to the *shore* on fine days. They *swam*. They walked around, and bits a pieces... *But*. Particularly on *Sundays*, some of the older guys would go out. They wouldn't bother with the sunshine. And in between the notion of taking the bus out and the last bus in, they'd sit around and have a few *pints*. And this was in the 60s. And in the same time, some Americans started to return, some of the Irish Diaspora coming back to Ireland and going round and around... So, the pub, instead of being *empty*, had customers in it... And that was the core that allowed the beginnings as it were.

'The pub' that Peter Curtin refers to is O'Connor's Pub on Fisherstreet in Doolin. It was established in 1832 by the Shannon family and was appropriately called Shannon's. But as was the tradition, when Gus O'Connor's father, Jack, married into the Shannon family and took it over in 1923 from his great aunt, Noreen, the new owner's name adorned the sign, and it became known as J. O'Connor's. Gus and his wife Dolly took it over in 1960, and the name changed again to Gus O'Connor's.

In the auld days, when they first owned the place, O'Connor's Pub was a very small venture. When Gussie and his wife Dolly bought the pub, he told me "it was only a small bar. Half of it was grocery, and there was very little money around in them days. But they made a living—a *kind of living*". Gus had to supplement the pub trade by travelling around in a van selling groceries around Northwest Clare. But of course, the pub got some business locally and from Lisdoonvarna. The Aran Islanders would also occasionally come into the pub when they came ashore at Doolin to conduct business on the mainland. The Islanders knew Gus O'Connor personally because he'd spent summers as a boy out on Inisheer learning Gaelic, and when they came ashore, for the most part in the summertime, they'd often stop

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<sup>3</sup> This was a tea and sweets shop at Doolin pier where musicians would occasionally play. It no longer exists.

into O'Connor's. As Peter told me, a few visiting Americans of Irish descent were stopping through as well. "Instead of *nobody* being there," he said, "there were some *people* there," which created a bit of an atmosphere that other, less frequented pubs couldn't guarantee.

Tourism in Doolin in the auld days, at least up to the late 1960s, was almost non-existent. Economic activity in general was fairly lacking. "Ah sure", an older gentleman told me, "it wasn't long ago that things were *bad*. Things were very bad fifty years ago—very bad *forty* years ago". Michael Coady, an early traveller to Doolin and a long-time friend of its inhabitants, wrote that "when I first knew Doolin at the beginning of the nineteen sixties it was without question a dying community in economic and social terms" (1996:27). Michael Coady and some of his friends are still remembered as some of the first tourists who came to Doolin to hear the music (even though they were just from the next county over). Today, the opposite of Michael Coady's initial impression couldn't be truer. Doolin is thriving economically. Now there are throngs of visitors, and there's money to be made. The same older man told me that "an awful lot of people started coming then in the 60s because they heard about the music you know. And the music was the big attraction and that's what made Doolin". It was a refrain I heard over and over during fieldwork.

#### IV.

##### **The Music before the Late 1960s**

One of the most dramatic things that has happened over the last 40 years or so is that the thread of traditional Irish music has been—depending on its current context—partially or wholly separated from the larger social fabric (Hall 1996:81). Put another way, traditional music used to be a single element in a larger contextual milieu of interdependent social entertainments: dancing, gambling, chatting, and courting. What's more, according to Hall, "[m]usic-making and dancing, seen in the light of the complexities of rural and community life, could not have been the generalised social activity implied by romantic literary sources and reiterated now in popular writing. Music-making and dancing too, conformed to the complex rules of role and status that governed all aspects of social and economic life" (*ibid.*:77). Things are different today. More often than not, the music is now listened to on its own in the context of pub sessions, and is played separately from traditional Irish set dancing. In modern concert settings or in spectacles like *Riverdance* (or similar touring stage-shows), the music has even been rarefied out of a folk tradition into an 'art-form'. In the auld days, while the music was greatly appreciated and loved in

and of itself, it was rarely played outside of the larger context of the *céilí*, the crossroads dance, the country house dance, or the dance hall. These contexts intimately tied the music to dancing, chatting, gambling, and socialising<sup>4</sup>.

### **The Céilí and the Crossroads Dance**

Music used to be played regularly in houses when neighbours would get together in the evenings to socialise. Glassie calls this a *céilí* (1995:41), but locals around northwest Clare would use the terms 'party', 'soiree' or 'hoolie' just as often. According to Arensberg and Kimball, the old terminology for it in northwest Clare was a *cuaird*.<sup>5</sup> They found that men especially would gather in the evenings at particular houses to play cards, sing songs, play a few tunes, tell stories, and to talk (1968[1940]:173). In my own experience of what is usually referred to as 'small talk' elsewhere revealed to me that talk is in no way small in Ireland. The structure of conversation is in itself important. A bit of gossip can even be structured into a 'tale'. Or it can be a game. Sides are taken on an issue, and the conversants parry and debate. The structure makes normal talk entertaining. When gossip or conversation skilfully employ the performative structure of the tale or of debate, it becomes 'great *craic*' and rises above small talk. Likewise, music can be great *craic*, and in the context of the *cuaird* or *céilí*, music and chat occupy similarly lofty places.

My experience in northwest Clare revealed that parties where traditional music is played still happen today, but compared to the auld days, they have lost their central place. Firstly, they are not the regular events that they used to be. Today, the television and the pub have replaced the 'visit'. Secondly, possibly due to their irregularity today, they are not the structured events that they used to be<sup>6</sup>. In the auld days, *cuairds* were organised by generation. The young men would never assemble at the older mens' *céilí* house and vice versa. Similarly, the *cuaird* was a collection of consociate relations, and seemed to have (albeit loose) boundaries of inclusion. Some even gave themselves official—though jocular—names like *The Dáil* (a reference to the Irish parliamentary assembly) (*ibid.*). The 'soirees' that I experienced were rare, and were more or less accidental gatherings of friends. They

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<sup>4</sup> The exception to this is the refinement of 'céilí band' music played for radio broadcasts in the 1940s and early 50s.

<sup>5</sup> As the area's Gaelic speakers died, this seems to be a term that was lost to common usage, but the lack of its use today (and its related terms) also indicate the changes that have occurred in musical contexts since the 1930s.

<sup>6</sup> I use the term 'structure' here in the sense that *céilís* were habitually and regularly attended, not in the sense that the events themselves are formally structured. Having said that, a further qualification is justified: As Glassie describes in great detail (1995[1982]), *céilís* do have their own subtle, informal rules of behaviour.

did not resemble the structured environment described by Glassie or Arensberg & Kimball.

Christy Barry, a local flute-player, told me what it was like to grow up in a 'céilí-house':

Ah. All I remember in our house was music. Music, dance, socialising. All the neighbours came in. Everybody just *came in*... Even though it was a very small, little house... That's where I got my love for music I suppose. D'y'know? Young and old came in and they played games or whatever they had to do. There was no television, no nothing like that... We were just the *main event* for entertainment... even though it was a small, little house.

They'd start by talking about their problems and the hardships of life, and they'd cry, and they'd share their problems: the awful amount of kids they had, and some of their kids would be sick, and—. It was all done at those events. That was where it was all done.

I asked him,

So I suppose it was a group of friends, then—fairly close people.

"Yeah", he said,

Close people who loved the music. Music was *loved*. It was *loved* for the reason that it was *nourishment*. It was all they *had*. It was their upkeep in *life*. It was their *spirit*. It kept them *alive*. It kept their *minds* right, and it kept them *going*...

They seemed to be very faithful and loyal to each other. And so it did do a lot for them. D'y'know? And that's where it was used mostly: in the houses... They'd all assemble at somebody's house—some farmhouse, some—. Different people would have it in different areas, different houses. D'y'know? And they'd stay at it all night until morning-like. They'd live it out until morning. D'y'know. That was the *main* purpose it, of music... The ladies got together. The men got together. And they talked about their working problems. The women talked about their children, their families, their hardships, the whole thing. Sometimes tears were shed. Sometimes there was hugging going on. All this stuff happened at a musical event. And the music was the—at the end of all that—they'd let free and they'd dance and they'd sweat. And, let's say, after the stories being told, that's where they got their healing to go on the next day. And that's really what music was about in Ireland.

In the summertime, music might be played outdoors in a level field, or more commonly, at a crossroads where dancers would have enough room to move about. "The road in front of us—", Christy told me, "the cross near us in the road just near

Ennistymon a couple of miles—the crossroads going onto the main road, every evening would be, like, full of young people, sitting on the walls, either dancing, singing, or playing sports... The days were long and there was plenty of time in 'em."

Music was seen to be a skilled craft with a purpose like any other rather than an art-form, set aside from the rest of one's workaday life. People often use the term *musicianers* instead of *musicians*. It describes the musician in action, contributing to a larger social environment, one who *does* something, not one who *is* something. Oftentimes, those who can play are the granddaughters or the nephews or the sons of some well-known musician. And oftentimes, their brothers and sisters are good players as well. So, like other crafts, music tended to run in some families and not in others. Still, tunes have to be learned, and some "just don't have music" while other "have it". In the auld days, musicians would learn tunes from locally renowned players. Christy's mother was one such local 'teacher'. He told me how people would come to the house, they'd have a chat over tea and biscuits and maybe she'd teach them a few tunes. The lesson was the purpose of the visit but again, it had to be included into a larger social setting of visiting, gossiping and taking some tea.

### **The Country House Dance**

The 'house dances' that this musician refers to are also called 'country house dances', and were a more formal event than the habitual gathering of neighbours at a *céilí*. I went to ask John Killhourey about the dances one day because he and his brother used to play for them, and occasionally host them. John has always been renowned as a fixer of clocks as well as a musicianer, and a multitude of wall-clocks surrounded us and paced the rhythm of our conversation. He told me,

Well, in my young days, I was going around to all of the house *dances*. Myself and my two *brothers* used to go, playing *music* to 'em. We'd have 'em every week, maybe sometimes twice a week, the house dances. They were *great*, you see.

A crowd might come into this house, you see. And they'd be *dancing* there, you see, until, maybe three or four o'clock in the morning, maybe... Or maybe *five*, and even *six*, maybe, in the *morning*.

Well, they might be *charged*—a little *charge* put on 'em for coming in, you see. A majority of the houses, they charged a *tariff* at the *door*—about a shilling... There were turkeys for gamblin', you see. There'd be Gambles then inside. Maybe down in the room, a-gamblin, along with the dance, d'you see. 'Twould be about *two* shillings, maybe. One-and-six [pence] or about two shillings, a fee, to go into the dances. 'Twould be.

We used to travel far and near, and we had no transport in *them* days, only the bicycles. And *walking* along. D'y'see?



*Walking.* We used to go over to the Cliffs of Moher for the dances. That direction, you know. Not exactly into the Cliffs, but in the direction of Moher. And aul' Moymore. And we'd go down then to Ennistymon and up to Moy in Miltown Malbay, maybe. And Doolin, in Carnaune above, up near Lisdoonvarna. Kilshanny. Maybe *occasionally* in the Kilfenora direction, to the dances.

Boys and girls would collect in, you see. You had to *invite* the girls who knew how to dance, of course. You had to go around to the houses, to fifteen or sixteen or twenty houses maybe, and ask the girls, the ladies to come. And they'd come then, you see. They'd come.

Oh, it'd be great *enjoyment*. A great big open fire down, a big fire, and you'd have seats up in by the walls for 'em to sit down in, all along. You'd have two, three, four, maybe five musicians up on a *stage* on a *table*. And *chairs* up on the table. About three together'd be playing. Or maybe four.

So, that was the *carry-on*.

Of course, House Dances were 'great *craic*', but they were also highly profitable. Oftentimes, a host would organise one simply to raise money for themselves. An older man from Doolin told me about how lucrative the gambling could be. "There might be a prize going of a couple of geese or a couple of turkeys or something like that. And maybe you could play anything—maybe a pig or a few *bonards*<sup>7</sup>. And it'd be a shilling to a guy. And I'd often see 30 or 35 teams of four." So, the hosts could make a very respectable profit from two turkeys or geese that they most likely raised themselves, and could host a night of great fun for the whole community.

The country house dance, then, was a rather different context from the *céilí*. They were bigger. They were wilder. They were public. They were organised to make money. But in one significant way, they were very similar to the *céilí*. The music that was played at a country house dance was, again, part of a larger social context of entertainments. The music and the dancing were symbiotic species. The one could barely exist without the other.

Locals in Doolin even recall that set-dancing used to take place at a shop that sold sweets, cigarettes and tea down by the seaside. "She had a nice dancing stage made in the back of her little shop", Gus O'Connor told me.

And it was an *attraction*, you see, because she'd be selling some of her stuff... The lads'd be there every *Sunday* and they'd be dancing and playing the *music*—d'y'know. An *awful* lot of musicianers used to come there...

Every *Sunday*, a few sets. And they were good. The girls got great practise back that time, you know. The girls that was down there on Fisherstreet, they were *great* dancers.

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<sup>7</sup> piglets

It was at this tea shop that the famous 'collector' of tunes, Seamus Ennis, made his first acquaintance with Doolin (Bourke 1986:54).

In an ironic twist of timing, the country house dances were made illegal in 1935, an era in which the newly independent government was trying to promote Irish 'Cultural Nationalism' (Curran 1996:57). Under the Dance Halls Act, dances had to occur in a 'licensed' premises, and the dances themselves could be 'supervised'. The Act was aimed primarily at the commercial dance halls that were mushrooming around the nation, but it also covered country house dances and even the more informal crossroads dances (*ibid.*). The parish priests would often use the pulpit to claim that sexual depravities were associated with dancing (*ibid.*; Ó hAllmhuráin 1998: 101-102), and it was the Catholic Church that pressured the government to pass the Act. Armed with the new Act and occasionally accompanied by the police, local priests regularly combed the countryside looking for dances to thwart. But despite this outwardly moral crusade, it was obvious that the priests simply coveted the profits that their parishioners were earning from the dances because, after the passing of the Act, most of the licences went to the parish priests themselves (Curran 1996:57).

The Dance Halls Act effectively eradicated country house dances in most places in Ireland (*ibid.*; Curtis 1994:14), but in more rural pockets like northwest Clare the practise was altogether more difficult to immobilize. John told me about the last country house dance that he could remember in the area, held in the late 1950s or early 1960s, and it happened to be one that he hosted himself.

It came in then at the end that you'd have to have a *license* for the dance. A *license*. D'y'see. A *license*. And if you didn't have a suitable premises, you wouldn't get the license. If it weren't like a dance-hall—the house, d'y'see.

And ah, I had a dance here. I think it wound-up all of the dances that were around the place, the last dance that I had in this house. That would have to be over forty years ago. Let me see. It *would* be, I'd say, over 40 years ago since I had this dance. And the Guards raided me, at my house. And I got a summons and I were brought into *court*. I were brought to *court*...

So that put an end to the dances.

### **The Dance Halls and The Céilí Bands**

But something else had also been keeping people away from the country house dances. Jazz and big band music had been growing in popularity well before the Dance Hall Act was put into legislation. A musical fusion had been created between

the big band music and traditional Irish music, and in the dance halls of the towns and cities, this exciting new music was used to accompany Irish set dancing. (See tracks 2 and 3). John told me,

The dance halls in the towns came into existence... and then *all* the people from the country was going into the *dance* halls. In there, they were going. The hall dances would be big *céilí* dances, d'y'see.

The use of the word *céilí* in this context has very little to do with the *céilís* that Glassie describes. These dance halls employed 'ceili bands' which consisted of a combination of 'traditional' instruments such as fiddles, flutes, accordions, concertinas or banjos and 'big band' instruments such as the piano, double-bass, and drums (Curtis 1994:14). Christy Barry remembered a local *céilí* band that had clarinets and a brass section. "It wasn't just fiddles and concertinas", he said, "There was a lot of brass in it... Irish music would be *dictated* by brass."

The way this music was played and performed differed radically from the music played at a *céilí* or a country house dance, too, even though the tunes themselves might have been the same. Before, musicians would have all played the melodic line simultaneously in unison. This allowed each musician to play on their own or with any combination of other musicians. In other words, even though certain musicians might prefer playing together, there was no such thing as 'membership' into a 'group'. The tradition of playing different versions of a tune was aesthetic marker as well. Finally, the order of tunes within a 'set' of tunes might be known beforehand, but quite often not at all. The 'lead' musician might simply call out a new tune or even just a key-signature towards the end of the previous one.

*Céilí* band music was different. One version of a tune was chosen and agreed upon by the band leader, and tunes would be formalised into arranged 'sets'. Like the big bands of the time, different 'parts'—melodic lines or rhythmic lines—were arranged for the varying instruments (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:101-102). *Céilí* bands first became popular in the late 1920s (*ibid.*), and as the country house dances waned from the mid-thirties onward, the *céilí* bands filled the void. In many ways, the music was very different from that which was played in previous contexts, but to some extent, this was a country house dance formalised and writ large. And popularity bred fame, especially after Radio Eiréann began broadcasting recordings of *céilí* band music on the air. By the 1940s, classically trained musicians were even auditioning traditional musicians before they were allowed to be broadcast on the air

(*ibid.*:112-113). In County Clare, two bands—The Kilfenora Céilí Band and the Tulla Céilí Band—became nationally famous.

### Early Collections and Early Sessions

The economic depression in Ireland in the 1950s was severe (Ó Gráda 1997:25), and it was hard on the céilí band scene as well. Emigration took its toll on Ireland's stock of musicians. Elvis didn't help either. The advent of rock-and-roll and its broadcast by radio pushed Irish music to one side (Curtis 1994:15). In most of the Republic of Ireland, traditional music became difficult to come by. The céilí bands were now only heard at Christmastime or at weddings, and one of the only regular venues for hearing traditional Irish dance music were radio programs. The programs broadcast by Ciarán Mac Mathúna and Seamus Ennis kept a core audience around the country satisfied (*ibid.*:16).

The influence of early recordings of traditional Irish music cannot be underestimated. Fairbairn has argued that early recordings of Sligo musicians, who tend to use more complex ornamentation, started to influence the performance style of musicians from other counties (1994:577). Interestingly, these early recordings were of Irish émigrés in New York and were later imported back to Ireland (*ibid.*).

Traditional music always remained popular around west and north Clare though, as did other 'folk traditions' that had long since died out elsewhere such as

the Straw Boys ritual at weddings, the Wren Boys at Christmas, and traditional forms of storytelling (Vaillant 1984:77). In fact, the west coast of County Clare was considered one of a few 'selected pockets' where these traditions still lived on (Curtis 1994:16).

Collectors from the



**Figure 2.7:** Straw Boys

Folklore Commission gathered materials in the area between the 1920s and 1943 (Coady 1996:8). Local people remember Ciarán Mac Mathúna and Seamus Ennis coming to Doolin to 'collect' tunes for their radio programs. Seamus Ennis wrote about his first trip to Doolin in his diary. He stayed out at the tea shop at Doolin

Point for two weeks. It was on the day that he left Doolin, September 30, 1945, that Ennis spent most of six hours collecting tunes and talking with a 24 year old Packie Russell (Bourke 1986:55).

Packie was one of a number of musicians around the area that played regularly at house dances, Miss Murphy's Tea Shop and other social outlets. His brothers, Micho and Gussie, "Willibeg" Shannon, and the Killhourey brothers—Paddy and John, to name a few, formed part of the core of this traditional music scene that was so healthy that it attracted academic 'collectors'. And these were the musicians who would play music occasionally in J. O'Connor's Pub in the 1950s. I asked Gus O'Connor when musicians had started playing tunes in the pub. "Oh, that was always there," he said, "but on a small scale". In her memoirs, the daughter of the local landlord even recalls dancing occurring there before the 1920s (Devas 1968:27). On special occasions, the locals would have an after-hours 'lock-in' and play music and dance. (See tracks 1 and 2). Unlike other musical contexts in which the genders were allowed or even encouraged to mix, women weren't allowed in the pubs in the auld days, and as a result, these early sessions took place in the private spaces of the pub—namely, the publicans' kitchen. I asked Seamus if it was unusual to have music in the pubs in those days. "It was", he said,

I'll tell you.

I remember now.

They might be playin there of a *Sunday* night you know, on a special occasion. Maybe it'd be in the *Christmastime*. Maybe around *Easter*. Maybe around St. Patrick's *Day*. And *auld* Connors now—Gussie's *father*—he'd have to be watching in case the Guards'd *come*. And they'd be playin down in the kitchen. The Guards were very strict that time with the pub licences you know... They tried to have long sessions on *them* nights you know.

I asked if this was happening in pubs in the neighbouring towns and villages: Ennistymon, Lahinch, or Liscannor.

He answered,

It is *now* alright, but earlier on it wasn't happening in Ennistymon. As far as *I know* it wasn't. Well, I suppose *in the 60s* it was alright-like but—you know. Not before that.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Note this gentleman's chronological qualifications. This is a conversational example of the way in which we 'dip' into the pool of remembered history and rearrange it to fit a chronology. First, he answers by talking about the present. Then, he reaches back to The Auld Days when "it wasn't happening". Then, he jumps forward to the Revival period "in the 60s" to qualify his statement, and then he finishes in the Auld Days again.

Soon enough, playing music in O'Connor's Pub went from being a special occasion to becoming a regular habit. Significantly, after the decline of the Country House Dances and the dance halls, publicans like Gus and Dolly O'Connor who encouraged musicians to play in the pub became the only real patrons of the music, and this patron-client relationship (an old institutional pattern that also included the priests, and prior to Independence, the landlords) was to become appreciably concretised in later years (see chapter 7). The economic depression of the 1950s and early 60s meant that there was little work to be had, and a bit of music in the pub passed the day away. Coady remembers that while the three Russell brothers "possessed an enormous body of music" between them, it was a relatively rare thing for all three of them to play together at the same time "due to personality differences" (1996:12). As one local put it, "Packie was fond of The Drop" and would often spend the afternoons in O'Connor's playing tunes on the concertina. Micho Russell would often play the whistle or sing songs during the evening. "Micho was the night man, and Packie was the day man", I was told. Gussie Russell, the third brother, was a brilliant flute and whistle player. I often heard it told that he was the best musician of the three, but that his intense shyness kept him from the limelight throughout the years. The Killhourey brothers, and other local musicians like Willibeg Shannon and Steve MacNamara, would also join in on a regular basis (*ibid.*) Recordings of these early sessions were made and broadcast by Ciarán Mac Mathúna and Seamus Ennis. The word began to spread amongst connoisseurs of traditional Irish music that Doolin was a place to hear a bit of the 'pure drop.' Others heard as well. Doolin was suddenly 'on the map'.

And then things started to change.

## V.

### Conclusions: The Habitus of History

Or more accurately, things started to change *again*. As this chapter illustrates, political, social, and musical change is nothing new to Doolin, to northwest County Clare, nor indeed to Ireland. What I want to show here, however, is that the period of social memory that I have delineated as the auld days was a period in which an older economic structure, a peasant economy, survived (but was largely faltering). Likewise, traditional Irish music survived in very small 'pockets' around the country, although from a wider perspective, the music was dying out for all intents and purposes (Curtis 1994:16).

There are three interrelated points I want to make here. Firstly, we have to know this history in order to understand the complex social situation in northwest Clare today, and in the next two chapters, I will continue to relay this record.

Secondly, it is my intention throughout this thesis to show how local histories and relationships are intimately related to regional, national and global developments. It is much too easy for us to embed ourselves in the local and forget the extra-local. As Kockel and Ruane argue, Irish ethnographies have been fairly sloppy about contextualising Ireland, and have thereby, implicitly or explicitly, "quasi 'created', different Irelands" (1992:7).

Finally, there are some interesting theoretical issues we can begin to draw out of this material concerning memory and history, but which will become clearer in the course of chapters 3 and 4. At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that, as ethnographers, we tend to rearrange the seemingly casual, non-sequential recollections of the remembered past that we experience during the fieldwork into causal, chronological written history. This is not merely an analytical process. Any understanding of the present is dictated by our knowledge and understanding of the past, and the very nature of remembering the past is a reorganising process (Vansina 1985:176). In that sense, it is also a creative process<sup>9</sup> (*ibid.*:43).

We can take this further. According to Connerton, there is a rarely dealt with kind of memory he calls 'habit-memory' in which the body comes to have a kind of memory of its own (*ibid.*:22-23). Habit-memory is the realm of 'conventionalism', or tacit intersubjectively agreed upon rules (*ibid.*:28). In other words, memory for Connerton is embedded in the social group (*ibid.*:37). This embodied concept of memory is very similar to Bourdieu's concept of the disposition, "a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*" (2000[1972]):83, italics in original). Bourdieu argues that dispositions are "durable" and "transposable" from one generation to the next. In other words, Connerton's individual 'habit memory' and Bourdieu's 'dispositions' are structured into a tacitly agreed upon social 'habit memory', what Bourdieu calls the *habitus*, which is then transferable from generation to generation, and provides a framework for social behaviour<sup>10</sup>.

For Bourdieu and for Connerton, social habit memories, dispositions and the *habitus*, are relatively stable entities: "regulating and regular" in Bourdieu's words

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<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that remembered pasts are somehow false or less true than written accounts of the past since written accounts were, at some point, orally transmitted and may require just as much interpretation (Tonkin 1992:113-114).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Bourdieu calls the *habitus* "history turned into nature" and contends that the "unconscious is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by incorporating the objective structures it produces in the second natures of the *habitus*" (*ibid.*:78-79)

(2000[1972]:72), but I would also argue that under duress, the “structuring structures” (*ibid.*) underlying the habitus are liable to change, therefore, changing the habitus as well.

In the next two chapters we will examine the radical ‘structural’ changes that occurred in northwest Clare due to the Revival of traditional Irish music and the explosion of prosperity brought on by the Celtic Tiger economy of the 1990s. These changes created a different kind of society, one that began to be thrust more and more into a global arena and at the same time quickly modernised. Of course, for the generations of people born into these new times, a different kind of habitus emerged, one that was not so constrained by the religious and nationalist hegemony, the poverty, and the agrarian-fishing economy of the auld days. At the same time, the social habit memories of the auld days persists. The founding social values of the auld days—reciprocity, egalitarianism, the notion of the limited good—remain. They are the basis, the point of reference for change. Despite the fact that these values occasionally exist uncomfortably beside an increasingly commercialised value system, they persist today in the habitus of the that older generation. What’s more, they also greatly influenced (or, to paraphrase Bourdieu, structured the structure) of the time-periods to come.



## Chapter Three—The Revival

High Art is very fine but it is not enough in the twentieth century—it was never enough.

—Ailie Munroe (1984:33)

Doolin was destined to be the nest for this hatching of new rules to break the old rules.

—Nicolette Devas (1968:26)

### I.

#### Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the emergence of a revival of traditional Irish music, its roots, its effect on Doolin, and its consequences. While the Revival, as it has come to be known, is in the first instance about music, as Vallely has pointed out it is also “a cocktail of awareness of value, politics, reaction to technology, conservatism, nostalgia, music and commitment. Essentially it involves much more than music, for it can build sub-cultures and new myths” (1999:318).

The Revival of traditional Irish music in Ireland was not an isolated event. Gershen argued that the Revival was largely the result of four elements. First, the influence from the folk music revivals that had been gathering steam in the United States and Scotland. Second, the recording and broadcasting of traditional Irish music increased. Third, competitive festivals of traditional music began after 1951. And fourth, the arranged compositions of traditional Irish music by Seán Ó Riada who founded what was to become the band, The Chieftains, had a huge impact (Shields and Gershen 2000:390).

Curtis largely agrees with this recipe, but adds another ingredient: the underlying current of growing economic prosperity in the 1960s allowed much of this to happen. A sense of “confidence permeated not only the business sector but also the arts in all forms. For one golden moment, everything was hopeful, everything was possible” (1994:17-18). This sense of possibility and freedom was described to me as part and parcel of the Revival by locals.

Two additional points must be made here though. First, Curtis was writing about the effect that economic prosperity was having *within* Ireland, but the development of modern tourist infrastructures in Ireland also increased the ease of

travel for people coming from other countries. What's more, an improvement in the Irish economy encouraged masses of Irish emigrants to return home. A consumerist buzz swept through the nation as shopkeepers and publicans expanded and improved their businesses and coach tours full of foreign tourists rolled through Ireland's villages (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:127-128). Any discussion of economics during this period, therefore, must—at least in part—recognise global trends. I would also argue that there was yet another element, in Doolin at least. The countercultural movement that emerged in the 1960s—associated originally with rock-and-roll and the folk revivals which started in England and America—added a youthful buoyancy to this heady mix of growing economic prosperity, easier travel, intensified external interest in traditional Irish music, and the internal changes in the music itself through innovative compositions, official competitions and the like. I couldn't summarise this strange coalescent mix and how it effected northwest Clare better than Peter Curtin did:

So, then, what you had [was] The European Union. You had the first inklings of people with money in Ireland—people getting *jobs* and money, and a bit of inward investment. That was another piece, where people began to come west and enjoy the hospitality along the west *coast*. The *music* was there, the music of the—the only music *available* was traditional music, right? And ah, people in the west coast were into the traditional music...

So, you had the *Americans* coming in. You had the *people* going out onto the bus to Doolin for example. Then you had the European Union opening, and people making a few bob in the cities coming west to have a few drinks and a bit of *fun*, and *likewise*, you had the opening up of the big lounge *bars*. The *large* dance-halls of the 1950s were kind of coming to an end, and people were having ballad groups in the bigger pubs, and *suddenly*, there was a kind of *focus* on Irish music in the broad sense of the word, which *helped* the popularity of the *core* of the music itself. And ah, the people could *see* that there was a genuine relaxation and *welcome* and a genuine sense of relaxed carefree fun in coming to places like Doolin.

And in *particular*, O'Connor's Pub—the O'Connor's themselves, Gussie—God Rest Him—and Doll, were really hospitable people. They were very genuine in the way that they behaved towards the people.

And that was largely the ingredients.

Of course, you also had a far more *relaxed* regime in the country. There was no such thing as drunken driving, breathalisers, less *motorcars* than there is now. You know, the safety factor—the caution—wasn't necessarily there. The laws weren't there and things were much more *easy*. And that was the beginnings of it. You also, *then*, had groups going out, like The Fury Brothers in *particular*, going to Germany. They became very popular. You had *agents* coming in from Germany to the All-

Ireland *Fleadh Cheoil* in Listowel looking at these groups, taking them *back*, putting them on the *folk-circuit* in Germany for example, introducing the European people to Irish traditional music, the younger people in these countries having *lost their own ethnic* music to a large extent. Looked at the *Irish* thing. Looked at the *mystique* of Ireland. Ireland was suddenly made *available* to European people. They could come to Ireland, particularly university students and people like that, *backpacking*. Staying in hostels sprung up. Cheap accommodation. You know?

So, many disparate things were going on at once to produce the unprecedented and sudden changes that came to northwest Clare in the late 1960s. The impetus for the Revival and the timing of its arrival in Doolin were due to events and shifting patterns that had been occurring internationally and nationally. People had more financial (and therefore physical) mobility as the Irish economy improved. Mass tourism had taken hold across the globe, and international travel to Ireland became more democratically accessible. A new generation in Europe and America was emerging. Some of these young people were searching for new experiences, and the romance and local traditions of places like Doolin were extremely appealing. Additionally, interest in traditional Irish music intensified within Ireland and internationally. All of these factors led to more travel to and within Ireland. Places like Doolin suddenly became a tourist destination, especially for aficionados of traditional music. These larger societal and economic factors deserve a closer analysis.

## II.

### **The Socio-Economic Backdrop**

#### **A Changing Economy**

According to O'Hagan, after the second World War in which Ireland remained neutral, Europe's economic productivity rebounded while Ireland's economy only grew very slowly. If one looks at the Irish economy longitudinally, it's clear that industrial and agricultural productivity actually rose. This was also the beginning of the important era of rural electrification in Ireland. However, in comparison to the expansive growth in Europe, it felt like stagnation. This incongruity between Ireland and the rest of Europe led to another wave of emigration as the Irish went abroad for better wages (O'Hagan 1995:34). Largely, the 1950s were "a miserable decade" (Ó Gráda 1997:25).

Economists don't always agree on why, but something happened in the late 1950s to reverse the stagnation. Some mark the end in 1958 when a bluntly written

government report was published and responsive measures were taken to address its critiques (*ibid.*:29). Another factor might have been a change in leadership and the overturning of the protectionist policies set up in the 1930s (*ibid.*). It was about this time that the government recognised the value of the tourism industry, and put grants and tax incentives in place to encourage the construction of accommodation for tourists. The quantity (and the quality) of places for visitors to stay increased dramatically, by almost 40% over the next decade (Deegan and Dineen 1997:33).

Economic policies in the 1960s, characterised by trade liberalisation and increased foreign investment, led to an increase in per capita income that considerably outpaced incomes in Britain even (O'Hagan 1995:36). Not only was there less emigration during this era, but immigration *into* Ireland actually began. It was a 'Golden Age' (*ibid.*). "For the first time in several hundred years", Curtis wrote, "a generation of young Irish men and women did not have to consider emigration as their only option. A dynamic new energy found release in this seemingly new Ireland, growing in confidence almost daily" (1994:18).

Trade barriers were actively dismantled throughout the 1960s. Tariffs were cut significantly, a 'free trade area' was created between Ireland and Britain, and in 1967, Ireland signed onto the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). All of these measures followed the general politico-economic amalgamating trend throughout Europe (O'Hagan 1995:36-37). Serious discussions about an integrated European entity—discussions that ultimately led to the European Economic Community, (now the European Union), and more recently a single currency—began as early as the mid-1950s (Maher 1986:50). To say nothing of the monetary or political effects that an integrating Europe was to have on Ireland, the shift was psychologically significant. It was the beginning of a new sense of independence for Ireland, one that wasn't merely defined in opposition to 'Britishness' (Graham 1997:8). Ireland officially entered the EEC in 1973, and ever since, has increasingly invested itself in a relationship with this emergent European 'community' (O'Hagan 1995:37).

*Bord Fáilte* (literally, the "Welcoming Board") was created in 1952 under the auspices of the Tourist Traffic Act in order to "encourage and develop tourist traffic", to "engage in publicity", and to license hotels and other accommodations (Deegan and Dineen 1997:21). Things had changed very quickly in the years preceding the act. While discussing the bill to create *Bord Fáilte*, a deputy in the *Dáil* (the Irish parliament) recalled that only a few years previously, tourism was even seen by some as an unwelcome annoyance to Irish society (*ibid.*). In the 1960s, the tourism industry expanded rapidly throughout Europe, and by the mid-1960s, the Irish

government began to give *Bord Fáilte* more funding and discretion as to where monies were spent (*ibid.*:36-41). John F. Kennedy even recognised the importance of the tourist industry in Ireland when he visited to country in 1963: "Other nations in the world in whom Ireland has long invested her people and her children are now investing their capital as well as their vacations in Ireland" (Bryant 1979:1). He was not wrong. Between the mid 1950s and the mid 1970s, the overall number of tourists doubled, and the number of North American tourists tripled (*ibid.*).

This economic "Golden Age" was to last for almost two decades, well into the late 1970s when Ireland was eventually crippled by rising unemployment and the aftermath of the oil crisis (Ó Gráda 1997:30). The point here is that during the 1960s and 1970s in Ireland, this glimpse of economic prosperity created a buoyant confidence. The positive mood that this new economic liberation produced was accompanied by two other major factors that are important to our history: the revival of folk musics in 'the west', internal changes within Irish music, and an emergent youth counterculture.

### **The Revival of Folk Music(s) Elsewhere**

The Revival of traditional Irish music in the 1960s and 1970s in Ireland was not without its historical pedigree and influential counterparts. In England, Cecil Sharp led an enormous effort to revive English folk songs as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, but his was a mostly academic effort. He spent most of his time collecting folksongs, lecturing about them, and compiling songbooks (Francmanis 2002:9). Ironically, Sharp and his 'collecting colleagues' had created their own, very high standards about what constituted folksong, who the 'folk' were, and what the genre meant. Indeed, they lamented the fact that the 'folk' (in the collector's definition) had abandoned their own repertoire of folk music for the dance-hall 'ditties', and they made a concerted effort to re-educate England's villagers about their own music (*ibid.*:13). They felt strongly that a nation's folklore was a natural birthright, a 'race-product', that if re-learned, would imbue the average Englishman with a stronger sense of nationalist pride and make him "a better citizen, a truer patriot" (*ibid.*:7). While the collections they made are invaluable, this was an unnatural view of folk music that assumed the academics knew more about the subject than the (supposed) 'folk' themselves, and one that had no popular foundation. For this reason, I would argue that this attempt at a *folk* revival largely failed.

In Scotland however, a grassroots revival of folk singing emerged after 1947 when the International Festival of The Arts was founded in Edinburgh. It exposed

traditional Scottish singers and musicians from the countryside to an urban audience (Skinner Sawyers 2000:151). Additionally, in the late 1940s, a Scottish Studies program was set up at Edinburgh University which, although again academic, proved to be a driving force behind a revival of traditional music in Scotland, a tradition that was actually taken up by singers and perpetuated of its own accord (Munroe 1984:53-54). Like the parallel folk music movement occurring around the same time in the US, the Scottish musical revival had a political edge to it, "virtually guaranteed by industrial decline, appalling social conditions, and a powerful socialist movement" (Skinner Sawyers 2000:152). By the mid-1950s, just a few years after its first introduction to an urban audience, Scottish folk music seemed to have suddenly appeared "with all the force of revelation to audiences of questing intellectuals, industrial workers, students, douce city folk and cosmopolitan culture-seekers", and it "could not be re-submerged" (Munroe 1984:58).

A revival of folk music had emerged in the US in the early twentieth century which later inspired the folk music boom associated with the emergence of the 1960s counterculture. This music was almost strictly balladeering: singing songs with or without accompaniment. Instrumental music was far less central to this new trend. A fairly direct lineage of folk singers created and revived music inspired by the 'common (and oft times oppressed) man' (Eyerman and Jamison 1998:70). It always has been a politically charged music in the US with a clearly pro-union, pro-working class, anti-fascist, anti-war agenda. Pete Seeger, and "Leadbelly" were well-known folk singers of the time (Munroe 1984:29-30). The influence of Woodie Guthrie, ('America's Robert Burns'), cannot be overstated (*ibid.*). In the 1960s, a new generation of musicians, inspired by their folk-singing forebears, established themselves commercially, and went on to sing the melodies of the counterculture movement. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Peter, Paul & Mary were perhaps the best known of this circle (Curtis 1994:18). They created a folk music 'boom', and true to the American folk tradition, they maintained the element of political protest in their music. The Civil Rights and the Anti-War movements provided enough material to sing about, and a growing youth counterculture provided a growing audience (Eyerman and Jamison 1998:97, 114).

"This movement..." P. J. Curtis wrote, "made folk heroes of four young Irishmen in white Aran sweaters who belted out the folk songs and ballads of their native land with moving passion, pride and manly gusto" (Curtis 1994:18.). Those four Irishmen were the Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem who used harmonies, a guitar and an American-style 5-string banjo for backing accompaniment to adapt their native Irish songs to this popular, commercial audience (Skinner Sawyers 2000:219). They

appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, and eventually performed at Carnegie Hall in New York and the Royal Albert Hall in London (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:129). Their international popularity of course made them instant celebrities 'back home', and prompted other native Irish ballad groups to join the fray. The Dubliners, the Wolfe Tones and the Furies quickly made their mark. The ballad boom, which had already begun in Scotland, came home to Ireland.

One of the great ironies about the revivals of folk musics in the twentieth century is that they emerged, to a large extent, in urban centres and spread outward into the rural countryside, not the other way around. I would argue that there are two simple reasons for this. First, folk musics often only survived in rural pockets, places like northwest county Clare or the 'deep south' in the US. In these places, revival is unnecessary. Christy Barry talked about it one day at his house in Doolin.

You know, music wasn't that plentiful all over, *really*. It wasn't. There was counties that never had it, really. It was really Clare and counties like up around Sligo and Galway. Just along the west coast there, up to Donegal, really.

Secondly, there is a common pattern in all of these cases in which people of urban extraction actively seek out the folk music of the rural countryside, learn it, perpetuate it, and create the driving force behind its revival. Urban revivalists desired what they imagined rural people had. This is even true of the 'failed' English revival, led by an urban academia. In the case of Ireland's Revival, this appropriation of a mostly rural music by musicians and singers from urban origins created a deep rift amongst musicians that eventually led to a politically charged debate over 'authenticity'. Today, the urban/rural question has become moot, but the debate over what is or is not 'authentic' traditional Irish music has only heated up. For some 'purists', the polluting 'inauthenticities' can be traced back to the origins of the Revival. Skinner Sawyers has pronounced that the "folk explosion" of this period an "ersatz authenticity" (2000:219). She writes that "scores of young people throughout the British Isles [were] invading pubs, strumming guitars, wearing fishermen's jerseys, singing watered-down versions of ancient ballads, and, in essence, passing themselves off as the real thing to anyone willing to listen" (*ibid.*). Some musicians I talked to in Clare felt that the Revival 'killed' the music, but many more thought that this period was more of an 'awakening'.

### Internal Changes in Irish Music

*Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* (pronounced roughly *co-altus cyeltory erin* and translating roughly to the “Musicians’ Association of Ireland”), or CCE, was formed in 1951 with the goal of supporting and disseminating traditional Irish music, dancing, and language in specific community settings. It was originally a small organisation formed as an offshoot of The Piper’s Club, an institution that dates back to 1908 (Henry 1989:69-70). But CCE grew quickly and became an important element in the traditional Irish music scene, especially in regards to the annual *fleadh cheoil* (“music competition”, pronounced *fla cyol*) that it sponsors. Today, CCE is a massive and influential institution with local branches in every county in Ireland (north and south), England, throughout Europe and North America, Australia, New Zealand (Henry 1989: 70-71), and now as far afield as Tokyo, Japan ([www.comhaltas-jp.com](http://www.comhaltas-jp.com)). Although CCE activities are varied and occur at both the national and local levels, the All-Ireland *fleadh cheoil* is by far CCE’s most important function. The *fleadh*, as its more commonly known, is held on the 4<sup>th</sup> weekend of every August (Henry 1989:75). There are formally judged competitions in various categories, formalised classes, and an endless series of informal sessions in pubs and on the streets.

Only a decade after its founding, tens of thousands of people were attending the annual *fleadhanna*, and by 1965, CCE was coming into direct conflict with the nascent Revival. Serious rifts erupted when a massive crowd descended on the 1965 *fleadh* in Thurles. The town was inadequately prepared for the crowd which included a large number of youths. The *fleadh* had been appropriated by a younger audience who clearly brought a different meaning to the music than the founders of CCE. It was no longer a quiet little competition for Irish musicians trying to promote, as one CCE member suggested, the “vision of an Irish idyll” (quoted in Henry 1989:69). The newspapers reported that this younger crowd—described earlier by one journalist as “bearded balladeers” and “guitar-propped jokers” (Paddy Tunny quoted in Curran 1996:60)—were more interested in debauchery and riotous behaviour than music. The youths were blamed for all the problems with that years’ *fleadh*. Another journalist depicted the whole row over the 1965 *fleadh* as emblematic of the ‘internationalisation’ that threatened Irish society generally (*ibid.*). Partitions and stereotypes were quickly drawn up. The “battle lines”, as Curran puts it, “were clearly drawn” (*ibid.*:61). The guitar-clad youths were assumed to be Dubliners: young, depraved, urban invaders corrupting the music. The ‘serious’ musicians were rural folk: older, wiser, ‘traditionalists’ trying to preserve it from ruination (*ibid.*). Some commentators defended the younger crowd though, arguing that the local businessmen were more to blame for not providing adequate facilities



to match the size of the crowd (*ibid.*). Regardless, musicians started saving themselves for more private sessions after the 'official' *fleadh* weekend was over. By 1970, the decision had been made to even move the annual competition as far away from Dublin as possible to attempt to limit the magnitude of the crowds. As a result, Listowel, in county Kerry, all the way across the island, has become a regular host (*ibid.*:61-62).

The episode at Thurles and the consequent tensions between 'revivalists' and 'traditionalists' reveals a change in meaning. As Bohlman has pointed out, the emergence of new ideologies about folk musics are in fact a central feature of revivals (1988:134-135). Very soon after traditional Irish music became popularised by the Revival, there was a palpable resentment towards some of these new fans and novice musicians. Not only was there a *new kind* of division between the knowledgeable 'keepers of the tradition' and these teeming masses, but, as Curran rightly concludes, it was also indicative of the fact that what was 'authentic' Irish music was being stretched and contested by a new generation (*ibid.*:62). I describe it as a 'new kind' because, as Mac Mahon points out (1999:112), divisions between conservatives and innovators have always been present. An institutionalised definition of what the music was 'about' was running headlong into a revival that had as much to do with 'lifestyle' as it did with the structures of a particular musical form.

CCE is a bureaucratic institution, an organisation, and while Irish music had been institutionalised before in various other ways, no musical organization had been so broad or influential in its coverage. In many ways it helped promote Irish music to a wider audience and even saved it from possible extinction (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:123; Curtis 1994:17; Henry 1989:69). In that sense, their role in the revival cannot be understated. However, institutions like CCE are, by their nature, authoritative, and as one recent journalist wrote of them, they "jealously guard..." their "territory from threats internal and external. Border disputes have been frequent and sometimes bitter" (McNally 2003:12). According to Bohlman, two central responses in folk musics to culture change are *institutionalisation* and what he calls *classicisation*, a move towards the standards of western 'art' music (1988:134). Clearly, CCE and the competitions are representative of this shift.

Opinions about CCE and the competitions can sometimes be bitter as well. Some musicians I know regularly attend *fleadhanna* and look forward to the exciting atmosphere that surrounds them, but many musicians were also dismissive of CCE. They feel strongly that the very act of competing and judging foster a misguided elitism in the music and erodes its original evocation of a sense of community. One man even suggested to me that 'the better musicians' avoid competitions altogether

today because "there are always too many musicians just showing off". Another person, not a player herself but an avid connoisseur, told me that she was concerned about what the act of competing was doing to the music:

Competitions never made music better. Competitions are still destroying music as far as I'm concerned. You *can't* play Irish music in a competition. Sitting down to play a tune for two or three people listening to you, sitting down to judge you, couldn't make it *better*.

No.

It *doesn't* make it *better*. It takes the *energy* out of the music because people are too *nervous* and too *careful* and too *everything*.

On the other hand, the younger musicians in the 1960s and 1970s whether they attended the *fleadhanna* or not, were exposed to this higher standard of musical ability, and were poised to take the music to new heights of quality. Christy Barry suggested that, through various means, these musicians were pushing things beyond what the older generation had taught them:

I think the younger musicians of the time were *great*. The younger lads took it further. They *peaked*. What the other guys were trying to do, they made it happen kind of, d'y'know. They *developed* the music into what it should be, really. They were a little bit more educated... They *mixed* more, and they *learned* more from each other than the older crowd did. The old crowd would be *set* in their *ways* in their *areas* and they'd have their own little things going... They wouldn't have tape recorders or anything up 'til then, really anyway, would they? D'y'know? They wouldn't have anything to learn tunes off of. They wouldn't have a great *variety* of music, the old people. They might have a *couple of tunes*, d'y'know, and that was *it*.

But the *younger* lads started to do more research and fuckin' bring out more stuff. And old stuff that was in *books* and stuff like that, d'y'know, and really get into it. And they'd come and put a little *enthusiasm* in the music. A bit of *life* and *energy*.

Christy adds to what Peter Curtin described earlier in that various extra-musical social factors coalesced during this period which led to the musical Revival. Here, Christy specifically addresses the essential differences between the generations. The younger, more educated and more mobile musicians were travelling and exchanging tunes from different regional styles. They were also doing a kind of scholarly research into the music and bringing back old, forgotten tunes which led to a revitalisation of the music, a renaissance. CCE competitions created a kind of educating structure in which a pedagogical hierarchy of 'classical' aesthetics were

applied to this heretofore fluid, orally transmitted folk-art-form. CCE drew up what it called a 'marking scheme' for it judges that read something like this:

Style and Ornamentation: 50 marks  
Command of instrument: 20 marks  
Rhythm and phrasing: 10 marks  
Time: 10 marks  
Tone and tuning: 10 marks  
Total: 100 marks

(from the 1993 version of the CCE Official Adjudication Sheet, as cited by Larson Skye 1997:106).

In a sense, the establishment of the *fleadhna*, and CCE's failed attempt to initially keep vast audiences away from them, actually helped reinforce what was to become one of the basic behaviours of the Revivalists: travelling far and wide for a bit of music and a bit of *craic*. The increasing mobility of musicians added an important element of excitement to the Revival. Again, Christy Barry described how exhilarating it was to hear, for the first time, music from other parts of the country.

And you were *travelling* a bit more to meet other people, other musicians. You were havin the get-togethers not just in the house. You were having the get-togethers *publicly*, [with musicians] from other counties and places we hadn't *heard* music comin from, that nobody had ever *been-like before* that. Like *Donegal* and places. And we were getting *their* influence a little bit. And we were starting to hear where *they* were at.

And 'twas *all* great music. *D'y'know?* 'Twas all fuckin *great* stuff. Their tradition was different from ours, but you could—. You could shake hands on it. You knew what *they* were about and they knew what *we* were about. And we were both doing the same *job-like*.

*D'y'know?*

Eventually, the distinct regional styles within traditional Irish music began to disappear (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:124). Partly, this resulted from these interregional influences. It was also due to the increasing number of recordings of traditional Irish music, especially after the early 1970s. But during the Revival, it was an exciting time of interregional musical communication, education and experimentation.

The second big change that occurred within the music started with the innovations of the composer Seán Ó Riada. He was born in Cork and raised in Limerick where he learned traditional Irish music on the fiddle. He got his first formal music degree from the University College Cork, later studied music in Italy

and France, and eventually returned to Ireland where he worked for The Abbey Theatre and finally, for his alma mater in Cork. During his lifetime, he composed liturgical works, pieces of classical music, and film scores.

Ó Riada became something of a musical celebrity in Ireland, and in 1960, he formed a group called *Ceóltirí Chualann*, made up of Dublin-based traditional musicians (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:125). This group, or “folk orchestra” as some have called it (Skinner Sawyers 2000:251), which performed Ó Riada’s ensemble-styled compositions of traditional Irish tunes, exposed traditional music to a “‘brave new world’, away from the country house session and into the ‘high art’ concert halls of the nation” (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:126). His compositions took traditional Irish dance tunes and interspersed them with polyphonic harmonies, solos, and improvisations (*ibid.*). For all of the changes in context and performative style that Irish music had undergone in the years since the auld days, this departure was perhaps the most radical because it changed the very structure of the music. The group changed their name to The Chieftains following Ó Riada’s death in 1971 (Cowdery 1990:24), and have since produced 41 albums, toured the world many times, and have recorded or played with musicians as diverse as Mongolian folk musicians, rockers like Sting and the Rolling Stones, and country-western singers like Lyle Lovett (Byrne 2003:22).

When they were first formed, it was clear from the start that this was an entirely new kind of Irish music, a new way of playing the old tunes. Through *Ceóltirí Chualann*, Ó Riada was able to bring traditional Irish music to a larger audience, but he also earned the respect of many traditional musicians by recovering and re-popularising lost tunes. Of course, he didn’t earn everyone’s respect, and in particular, his vocal disdain of the *céilí* bands ruffled a few feathers (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:126-127). He was only forty when he died, but he had introduced a fundamentally new idea into Irish music: that one could experiment with its form, its melodies and its arrangement. Whether or not Ó Riada would be pleased with the following assessment is debateable, but all of the traditional Irish ‘super-groups’ that have emerged since the early 1970s—from the Bothy Band and Planxty to Solás and the Pogues—have him to thank for suggesting this new way of playing and performing (Curran 1996:62; Skinner Sawyers 2000:252).

So, outside Doolin and northwest Clare, shifts were taking place in the national economy, more and more tourists were coming to Ireland, revivals of folk music were emerging in ‘western’ societies, and changes within traditional Irish music were occurring. This complicated milieu of social and economic change was the subtext to life everywhere in Ireland, but in the day to day existence of the people of northwest

Clare, these changes had not yet 'arrived'. When it did, in the form of massive crowds of revivalists, it was sudden and intense.

### III.

#### The Revival Comes to Doolin

Christy Barry contextualised the historic 'moment' when the Revival arrived:

The *old* music was lingering for—for the last hundred years.

'Twas *lingering*, d'y'know.

'Twas barely just *hanging in* there, with all the *invasions* of different people coming in. They broke up our culture a bit, d'y'know?

And there was little pockets of music that just *barely* lived on. It just happened to be *Clare*. Clare kep' it *going* kind of, and in different *areas*, d'y'know.

And then, everyone started to get interested in it.

Seamus summarised it this way:

An awful lot of people started comin in the 60s, because they heard about the *music*-like, you know.

And the music was the big attraction and that's what made Doolin.

The people who "started comin" to Doolin in the late 1960s brought the Revival with them. Again, it was by its very nature, something from the outside, because the music never needed 'reviving' in northwest Clare. Here was a true folk music, existing in its natural environment, passed down orally from generation to generation. As Michael Coady, an early visitor to Doolin, wrote, "Backpackers from all over the world were amazed and delighted to find such a thing: a place where 'real' folk musicians played music which was a living communal reality and not something dead for generations and self-consciously resurrected by scholarly types who met in folk clubs at weekends" (1996:15). The 'real thing' had been 'discovered'. Because of the arrival, *en masse*, of these 'musical tourists', it became a kind of mecca for traditional musicians (and novice musicians), hippies, and connoisseurs of the music, which in turn attracted more of the same. A feedback cycle was created in a very short amount of time. It was a relatively sudden change and a monumental one. Suddenly, the crowds swelled and overfilled Doolin's three pubs. "Anyone could turn up", wrote Coady, "players famous or unknown from all over Ireland, musicians of all kinds from America, Britain or continental Europe, painters and

poets, journalists and photographers, drop-outs and millionaires, academics or judges or politicians" (1996:15). Christy Barry went on to tell me how the Revival spread quickly from the Dublin ballad scene in the east to Doolin in the west and what it was like in those days:

It'd be all *singing* and *ballads* and *rebel* songs and stuff [in Dublin]. 'The Dubliners' [the ballad group] were creating an atmosphere on *that* side of the country for *that* kind of stuff and sellin themselves and going off on the odd tour...

Then, everyone started to get into the *business* end of it. The business started to *grow* there around that time. And everyone could see the potential for *tourism* and things started to change then, *very* drastically...

You always had *Americans* comin for the *longest* time here—you know. Americans have been comin here for *years* upon *years*. They been comin since way back... And the *French* would come, you know. And you'd have *English* people come over—you know—you'd have English *hippies* come over, always. *All* the European countries started to come away, one by one—*Swedes*. The Swedes came a *lot*.

A few minutes later, I asked him:

So, what—what was it like back then? I mean, with the kind of people coming from all over? There were musicians starting to come to play?

He answered,

Well, you'd have the odd fellow come with his—his *accordion*, a big hippie-like guy coming with long *beard* and his *knaversack* and he'd be after *hitching*, maybe, from *Galway* or *hitching* from *Sligo* or wherever. Or Dublin or wherever.

And he'd *stay*. He'd bring a *tent* with him and he'd *stay*. He'd *stay*. And there were plenty of places for camping at that time. You didn't have to *pay* for it even.

D'y'know?

You could find anyone's field, they'd just tell you, "Fire Away!", d'y'know. We had very little *showers*, but *rivers* that they washed in.

*All* those people came in and they played everyday then. They came in and *played* and it was *beautiful*-like. And d'y'know, it was—. And some of The Greats came there.

You had *all* those people come, and they'd join in the sessions *everyday*... We'd lead off the session *everyday*. And every time you'd look around, there'd be a new bunch of musicians there after *arriving*, and they'd be there a *week* or something. The sessions would be *so good* at some times that it would be *unbelievable*. There'd be no hang-ups, or no—.

And if we wanted to learn tunes, we learned tunes off each other. If some guy had a nice, new tune, we'd listen to it. And we'd ask him if we could learn it. And maybe in the course of a *week*, we'd pick it up. We would get something from him, and he'd learn one from us, and we wouldn't see him again for a couple of months again, or maybe five months, six months, and he'd show again. But there was *always* a constant flow. And they were all—. They'd be *great names* now in *music-like*...

There's not *one star* that you can buy their record that has not played in Doolin.

This passage illustrates a number of interrelated things that need to be addressed in more detail in the rest of this chapter. First, there was a lack of infrastructure in Doolin to accommodate this new class of tourist, or even an easy means by which to travel to the village. Secondly, a radically new (and radical) type of tourist arrived in Doolin: the 'hippy'. Thirdly, this all created a buzz of excitement in Doolin, and Doolin became one of the most important geographic locales for the manifestation of the Revival. Fourthly, what was happening musically in the pub sessions in places like Doolin<sup>1</sup> spread outward, was reproduced elsewhere, and helped change the very nature of the music itself.



**Figure 3.1:** Revival sessions must have resembled big festival sessions like this one

Hitching was a common means of getting to Doolin in those days—for many, the *only* means—and once they'd finally arrived, there were few places to stay. Seamus told me of only two official tourist accommodations before the Revival hit Doolin, and both were well outside the main part of the village. Locals with their own

houses sometimes let these new visitors 'camp out' for awhile. One local man described his own participation:

All of em used to come stay with me that time when they came here. They stayed with me. That was the first hotel they came to! (laughs)

Well, they'd camp out back if there wasn't room in the house. Or, they'd put their caravan around the back into the field in the back, and they'd wash in the house, and they could eat and cook and put stuff in the 'fridge. We looked after em all, everyone

<sup>1</sup> Doolin was not alone as a site where the Revival came home to roost. Places primarily along the west coast like Dingle in county Kerry, Galway City, and Sligo were churning out the sessions as well.

one of em—Americans, Australians, Canadians, French, Germans, the whole lot.

Tents in cow pastures became a common sight, too. Locals were very accommodating, but the lack of a tourist infrastructure does not mean that locals weren't aware of the business opportunities that had, quite literally, arrived at their doorsteps. Very quickly, tourist accommodations were being built or created out of old buildings.

So, Doolin was difficult to find in the early days and lacked the amenities of a 'typical' holiday destination. On the other hand, tourists did not go there by chance in these early days, and this is my second point: a tourist to Doolin in the late 1960s or early 1970s would have heard enough about the place to know that they'd have to be self-sufficient. These were people who were very serious about hearing or playing some traditional Irish music, and had to be determined enough to find their way there and then deal with the lack of amenities once they'd arrived. Many, although by no means all of these new tourists were 'hippies', caught up in the larger, international countercultural movement and the other folk revivals that were occurring elsewhere. Christy Barry said proudly,

My generation really broke up the melting, and they went fuckin crazy... They totally went against Church and everything. Free love. The whole fuckin lot started *big-time*-like. And that was the late 60's and early 70's stuff. D'y'know?... I think it was the nature of people at the time around the world.

I asked him once why the music got so good during the Revival. He answered rather dramatically, not by describing a change in the music but a change in society: "I think people were starting to come out of *slavery*", he said. He described how his generation was beginning to become aware of the cultural, political, and especially the religious hegemony that previously had such a strong hold over Ireland. He put it another way: "The music came out of the times", not the other way around. So, there was a very important social change that lay behind the Revival as well.

On the other hand, it's important to point out once again that the habit in 'the west' of associating folk music revivals with outright countercultural subversion and political reaction was largely a foreign one, not that local people had nothing to react to or to be subversive about. The Revival in Ireland did happen to occur at a time when 'the Troubles' began in the north, and no doubt, for some in the north, traditional Irish music became a kind of banner for Republicanism. But as Vallely wrote, "In Loyalist eyes – and in the eyes of ultrasensitive folk who sometimes throw



the baby out with the bathwater, the concurrence of the two events: - the rise of the national struggle again, and the revival of traditional music – could be viewed as part of the same package. But this is a superficial judgement, and incorrect” (1993:109). Local motivations for a bit of subversion—nationalism, frustration with the Catholic Church, with the State, with cultural conservatism—might have been home grown, but any association it might have had with the music was not present before the Revival. Moreover, the alternative countercultural hippy lifestyle—and all the trappings of that lifestyle: the long hair, the clothes, the drugs, the free love—that was also to become partly associated with the Revival of traditional Irish music in Doolin, was in essence imported (Curran 1996:5). Put simply, despite the associations it came to have with counterculturalism (what we might call politics with a little ‘p’), the Irish Revival was quite unlike its equivalents in America and Scotland because it was not an *intrinsically* political music (with a capital ‘P’). It was and is music to entertain listeners and to dance to.

Bohemianism is nothing new to Doolin. The son of the local landlord, Francis Macnamara, who had a house in Doolin, used to invite his artist and painter friends there in the auld days (Curtis 1994:151), and their antics included heavy drinking, dancing, and storytelling with the locals down at O’Connor’s Pub, and a liberal dose of nude bathing down at the shore (Devas 1968:27-30). So, the influx of ‘hippies’ and other bohemian types at the end of the 1960s and 1970s, a new variant on an old idea, was not as shocking as it might have been.

Foss and Larkin suggest that during the pre-1969 ‘political’ phase, ‘hippies’ in the U.S. largely viewed themselves as a collective critique of mainstream society, and developed a kind of group identity marked by drug experimentation, sexual liberation, and a collective search for and discourse about subjective religious experiences. Within the ‘youth movement’ in the U.S. anyway, the “overt political impulse largely exhausted itself by 1969” (1976.:47). Afterwards, as political motivations ebbed, they argue that a second more individualistic phase developed which emphasised the notion of ‘mellowing out’, ‘experiencing nature’, and pursuing simpler lifestyles (*ibid.*), and this was around the time that people started travelling in droves to Doolin.

Foss and Larkin outline five major (heavily interrelated) themes in the writings, proclamations, and actions of the movement. These are what they call the “shared subjectivist ideology” of the hippy ‘vision’ (*ibid.*:48): anti-materialist communality, better interpersonal relationships, higher states of consciousness (which led to purposeful drug use and to the exploration of western and non-western

spiritualities), sexual liberation, and a general rejection of hierarchical authority (*ibid.*:48-49).

Doolin and northwest Clare had a number of these themes in natural abundance even before hippies made their way there, and it was easy enough to import the missing themes. First, the socio-economy in rural Ireland, essentially a small-holding 'peasant' economy, lacked a great deal of material wealth to begin with. This fact of life was not an idealised 'vision', it was simply the harsh truth. Poverty created a natural lack of materialism while stressing reciprocity and gifting<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, Doolin's tradition of music, storytelling and *craic* was (and is), in its own way, a search for something higher and more artistic than plain talk, gossip, popular music and 'normal' living. When 'good *craic*' is achieved during a music session (see chapter 8), a higher state of consciousness comes into being and a collective existential sense of community fills a room. Here, visitors found a 'natural drug', a musical method for attaining a sense of *communitas*. Of course, the session (and earlier musical contexts like the Country House Dance or the *céilí* for example) were ubiquitously accompanied by stout and lager, whisky and vodka, which were an established and accepted means of achieving altered states of consciousness. Finally, a rejection, or at least a suspicion of hierarchy has always been a prominent feature of the rural people of northwest Clare. Again, there is a strong feeling that one should de-emphasise one's own wealth or power within the community, even today<sup>3</sup>. The free love and the drugs—the remaining two "themes"—were easy enough to import—literally and figuratively—and easy enough to get away with<sup>4</sup>.

What's more, northwest Clare is a place of outstanding rural beauty, and the trend in the countercultural movement towards 'experiencing nature' and 'leading a simpler life' could be more than satisfied in this beautiful agricultural landscape, sandwiched between the Burren, the Cliffs of Moher and the coast (with The Aran

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<sup>2</sup> Although some might argue that these values are disappearing fast in Ireland, an active de-emphasis on personal wealth and related emphases on reciprocity and gifting was still very much the case in northwest Clare in 2003.

<sup>3</sup> I remember when one local man bought a Mercedes Benz for example, and a whole joke-cycle was created about it for about a week, and then was suddenly dropped. It reminded me of hunter-gatherers belittling a hunter's prized kill in order to prevent him from thinking too highly of himself. It's a behaviour not meant to necessarily harm the person. Its purpose is to bring him back into the fold of the community. The ridiculed individual participates fully by *not protesting*—one must be a 'good sport', unless of course, someone 'crosses the line'. Furthermore, the joke-makers in these situations are his or her closest friends. It would be inappropriate, or at the very least a bold statement of one's friendship, for others to take up the ridicule. Another common joke was to call anyone in the village who attempted to take too much of a leadership role in the community, which has no formal 'village council' or elected officials, "The Mayor". The subtext in both examples is a simple and good-humoured rejection of hierarchy.

<sup>4</sup> One man was fond of telling a story about getting pulled over by the *Gardaí*, and fistfuls of marijuana lay on the dash of the car. The curious officer, never having seen the drug before, asked if they'd been sleeping out in a field the previous night.

Islands just offshore). Therefore, I would argue that when backpacking hippies and other good-lifers 'discovered' Doolin in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, it was to some extent what they had been searching for all along. Moreover, Foss and Larkin argue that after the overtly political phase came to a close in 1969, the music festival (Woodstock being the obvious example) became the locational gatherings of the 'hippy community' (*ibid.*:55). The Revival in Doolin was in a sense a constant festival of traditional Irish music. Furthermore, it could be argued that the weakening of the folk revivals and the countercultural movement elsewhere only strengthened and popularised the Revival in Ireland in the 1970s.

As more and more people, musicians and otherwise, poured into northwest Clare during the summers, there were sessions of Irish music being played in the pubs daily, and this too was a change. As Koning wrote about east Clare a little over a decade later, "The abundance of informal sessions in East Clare... is a result of the interference of visiting musicians with local culture rather than a feature of the culture itself" (1980:421). Koning's use of the word 'interference' here polemically overstates his case, but otherwise, he is correct. Before the Revival in Doolin, entertainment in the pubs consisted largely of a bit of witty conversation peppered with a few tunes from one of the Russell Brothers and others, and on rarer occasions, musicianers might accompany a night of set dancing. After the Revival came to town though, sessions started as early as 10:00 a.m. and went on all day as visiting musicians came and went. The sessions might swell to include dozens of aspiring players, and this went on until the pub closed. It was, as people often described it, "one constant session". Christy said,

We'd play eight hours a day at that time. That wouldn't be a night session like now. That'd be all day... Seven days a week, d'y'know? You wouldn't know if it was Monday or Friday sometimes.

After the pub closed, there might even be a party to go to at someone's house, or at a visitor's campsite.

All of this led to a very exciting atmosphere within which musicians, learning musicians, Irish music connoisseurs, and those searching for what they perceived to be a kind of 'cultural authenticity' were arriving from all over Ireland and all over the world to listen to sessions, play in them, trade tunes, and soak up the exciting atmosphere. Doolin suddenly became the geographic location, one of a few that is, for the Revival. There was a seasonality to the Revival in Doolin, though. These huge sessions and the international visitors were mostly summertime fare. One

musician I interviewed told me that the wintertimes, even during the heyday of the Revival, were bleak and lonely. This is pattern that began in the auld days, whereby the summer was characterised by activity and the winters were times of rest, and it is a pattern that continues today.

The Revival sessions in northwest Clare occurred first at O'Connor's Pub in Doolin. That was the setting in which The Russell Brothers—Micho, Packie, and Gussie—first attracted people. It was here that people could hear a little music and enjoy the *craic* and a story. Christy described what O'Connor's was like before more and more people came to the area and changed the social activities in the pub:

O'Connor's  
would have sessions,  
would have Packie Russell in there, *sittin*.  
And you'd have a different kind of group of people going in  
there.

A *bachelor* kind of a group of people.  
who wouldn't be too interested in getting up dancing *anyway*.  
They preferred to talk, and they preferred to *slag* and *bullshit* each  
other all night long at the time, d'y'know?

But they were *great company*... A lot of *stories*. But people  
were interested in those fellows' [stories]. It was like long, old  
stories, and fairy stories, and a tune. And Packie Russell was a  
very *wisdom* kind of—and a very—a man that wouldn't *withdraw*.  
He'd add to the *fire*, you know. They'd *drive* a situation—you  
know—and make a *big deal* out of it. And some people'd be  
confused, others'd believing it, others wouldn't know whether it was  
*bullshit*, and—. They had their own *fun*. D'y'know what I mean?

But a *lovely social life* they had there.

I said,

So it was an entertainment based on talking and storytelling.

He answered,

Yeah.

And they would have set dancing in the kitchen previous  
years to that. You know, they'd have little bits for when people'd  
come around. And a lot of musicians came up from Ennistymon to  
play there at that time, a long time ago... and they all came up  
there to play for a few years, for the pints. You know, that was the  
pay they got.

It was in this setting that the first Revival sessions took off amidst these local bachelors who were able to entertain people with witty conversations and storytelling

even when there wasn't a tune to be heard. Peter Curtin explained how this quickly snowballed.

And once it got that momentum going, more musicians wanted to play there, because if, they knew, if they went to Doolin, there was always a session going on in the pub. They could always join in... they could go there, and virtually all day long—from like 12:00 to closing time—there was always somebody about to either scratch on the fiddle or whatever, d'y'know. It was like that.

Then, *popularity breeds popularity*. Some people like to go where the action is. You know, if people want to learn music, and they know there's good musicians down there, well then, that's the place they'll go to. So. And then you get to a certain kind of critical level, and then it—kind of—keeps itself going there, thereafter, you know.

In the Roadford section of the village, there are two other pubs: McGann's and McDermott's. When the Revival first hit Doolin, McGann's wasn't called 'McGann's' and was, in the words of one local, "only a small little kip". It re-opened up in the mid-1970s by Tony and Tommy McGann and quickly gained a reputation as a place to hear quality sessions. In Lisdoonvarna, the Roadside Tavern quickly became a very popular 'music pub' in the early days as well. Peter Curtin describes the role that the Roadside Tavern played during the Revival:

This pub here would have been involved in it, because as I said to you, this pub and O'Connor's Pub in Doolin in particular—and to some degree McGann's—McDermott's *at that time* wasn't really *involved* with traditional music that much—the musicians used to *float* between O'Connor's and The Roadside.

McDermott's was popular with the locals before the Revival, but the music heard there was more along the lines of 'dance hall' music, popular dance music that mixed Irish ballads and tunes with rock-and-roll and country-western songs, played by amplified 'bands'. It was a very popular place for set dancing. Christy remembers playing there with his family 'dance hall' band called 'The Rambling Rose'.

Doolin was only becoming *popular* then. My first gig in *Doolin* was in 1969 with the band. It was one of the early, first gigs we done was in McDermott's in Doolin, amplified.

Now, we had our *amplifiers*-like. So, that's—. We done that on a regular *basis*. It wasn't a *session*. It was a—. People came and *danced*, and we came *prepared* ...

But *very humorous* people in Doolin, *slaggin'*, and very entertaining people. *Great*. And I remember all the *men* in there and the women comin in, and—d'y'know—there'd be *married* couples, and I remember they'd be *dancin*, and the *passion* they had for the dancing. And—d'y'know?—when they danced, they *danced*, d'y'know. It wasn't for *show* or anything. They just loved to dance, and get *out* of themselves and mingle around and enjoy the music, and praise the music. And they *loved* what was going on, d'y'know?

It was easy to play for em, you know. You felt good playing for em. It was nice, d'y'know.

So, first O'Connor's started filling with a few incoming musicians and fans, then McGann's, and finally, it spilled into McDermott's Pub, too. In fact, sessions started to be played anywhere where musicians could find a small corner to huddle into. A hotel in between Doolin and Lisdoonvarna became a place to play. These were the settings in which the music of the Revival was first heard. As time went on, places like McDermott's and other local pubs got caught up in it and became 'music pubs' in their own right.

Music became big business for the publicans during this period. Gus O'Connor remembered when, in the 1970s, Guinness Corporation told him that his pub sold more Guinness than any pub in County Clare except 'Dirty Nellies' at Bunratty Castle. Advertisement was unnecessary. Word of mouth carried the names of these pubs worldwide. As Gus O'Connor told me, "The people who *came* there advertised it... I think we must have had someone from nearly every country in the world at some stage. And they wrote about in their different newspapers in their own country". Again, it was the music that attracted people to Doolin, and according to Gus O'Connor, "Of course, the Russell Brothers were the main attraction". Even before the Revival hit Doolin, the Russell Brothers were attracting people to O'Connor's Pub. Collectors of traditional music were coming to record tunes from them. Ciarán Mac Mathúna, according to Gus O'Connor, was the first to come to broadcast a recording from O'Connor's on RTÉ, the national radio station. But other radio and television crews from all over The British Isles quickly followed suit. He explained how it worked.

You'd know they'd be coming. They'd let you know. And you'd have lined up the musicians.

I said,

Oh, I see. So you would have called Micho [Russell] and told them to come on down.

"Exactly", he replied,

They started to get a few bob for that now, which was good help.

Later, I asked him to tell me more about the money that was being given to the musicians:

So when did the musicians start getting paid for the sessions?

He answered,

I think when the television [crews] started paying them. That was kind of— "Well, now we'll have to get a few bob for this". And I always gave em a few bob anyway, before anybody ever asked me for money. They'd get their food, three meals if they were there all day. And if they were going somewhere, then you'd give them a fiver or a tener. I was never mean with them... Anything they needed for a few pounds, you gave it to them. You didn't specify what amount really. But now, I think it's straight down the line.

There was a natural progression then from a casual generalised reciprocity to the wage-like payments that are given out to musicians today. Musicians have always been paid in some form for their craft. The Revival only changed the manner in which payments were made, regularising them. This began to create a formal economic relationship between publicans and musicians, but as more and more money was to be made from the increasing number of visitors, it was only right that the musicians received more compensation as well. It was reasonable, and even though it created a corollary undertone of tension in some circumstances, a symbiotic relationship emerged (see chapter 7).

Through broadcast recordings, word of mouth, and journalism, the Russell Brothers, especially Micho, became celebrities<sup>5</sup>. People often said to me that they are responsible for the thriving economy in Doolin today, and it's hardly an exaggeration. The Russells were the centrepiece of Doolin's music scene, and Micho in particular, attracted attention. Micho's personality was suited to performance somehow. He had a gentle personality and a love for traditional music, song and storytelling. His deceptively simple whistle-playing earned him the title of All-Ireland Champion in 1978, and as his fame increased, he was asked to go on tour. In his lifetime, which was tragically cut short in 1994, Micho travelled throughout the United States and Europe many times, always to return home to sit around the fire at O'Connor's. He

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<sup>5</sup> Innumerable books and articles have been written about the Russell Brothers. I do not feign to be able to tell their story. Michael Coady (*The Well of Spring Water*, 1996) and Dennis Winters (*The Piper's Chair*, 1986; *Doolin's Micho Russell*, 1990) were their close friends, and I would refer the reader especially to their tributes.



is often called 'The Ambassador of Traditional Irish Music' as a result (Winters 1986:1). Illustrative of Micho's renown, a postcard from continental Europe was sent to him with the inadequate mailing address "Micho—Ireland" and it actually got to him (Winters 1990:17). The other two brothers, Gussie and Packie, preferred to stay home and let the world come to them. Michael Coady remembers watching his friend Packie sitting at the pub "through this non-stop feast, playing or listening, meeting and drinking and talking with thousands of people from the four corners of the world" (1996:15).

In only a few short years, an amazing change had occurred. The music had somehow been 'revived'. This tradition of Irish dance music, belittled only a few decades before, was now popular throughout the world, and Doolin was at the centre of the excitement.

#### IV.

#### **The Turn of the Tune—How The Revival Changed the Music**

The Revival came to Doolin but Doolin did not swallow it whole. The intensity of the sessions there changed the music, but the change was too great to be contained by a small place like that. Doolin (and places like it) acted as a kind of crucible. The music spun out of northwest Clare, carried off by the constant ebb and flow of people. And the Revival, having been partly motivated by other folk music revivals elsewhere, now began to graft elements from those other revivals onto Irish music. It was all but "inevitable that a new sound would emerge" (Curtis 1994:24). This 'new sound' became widely popularised in 1972 when a new group called Planxty released a self-titled album amalgamating traditional dance tunes and the kind of ballad singing that had been occurring in the United States, Scotland and Dublin (*ibid.*). This mixture of styles was an instant hit, even though it wasn't altogether novel. Seán Ó Riada had formed the precursor to the Chieftains well over a decade previously, and Johnny Moynihan, Andy Irvine and Joe Dolan had formed a 'band' called Sweeney's Men in 1966 which also began to combine elements from the Ballad Boom with traditional instrumental dance music (Rice 1995:1). The difference was in the timing and the presentation. Planxty's youthful and energetic sound appealed to this new youthful and energetic countercultural audience. They grew their hair long and had hippy moustaches and beards: they looked like rock stars. They were members of that very generation, and they were 'radicals'. Their charisma as a group and their musical virtuosity made them instant stars throughout the British Isles and Europe (*ibid.*:24-25). Other groups soon followed

suit. De Danann and the Bothy Band in particular became influential. These groups brought the appropriation of traditional music by the younger generation full circle, an appropriation that arguably began at the *fleadh* in Thurles in 1965. Planxty and the Bothy Band were named repeatedly by musicians I talked to as the inspirational reason they first started to play traditional Irish music. Finn told me how he first became a musician, and how this new energetic, youthful brand of music, both in these early Revival records and the lively Doolin scene, inspired him.

Doolin was certainly, kind of, my instruction, where I fell in love with it...

I suppose you're well aware of the 60's Revival with Planxty and The Bothy Band, and it brought a whole new energy on the music. I suppose the music here was coming more from that vein than it was from the *céilí* band era or—ah, people playing the older style. And I suppose it just appealed to me more...

I suppose it had a lot more energy in it.

There was more 'music' in it, played more *for* the music rather than for the dancing. A lot of the older music would have been 'pumped out'.

Yeah, some of the older musicians—or, *my* perception of it—the tuning wouldn't have been as fine. It's just a rougher sound all around, where [later] people played somehow more dynamic music, which is—yeah—more appealing.

So earlier, the 'older music' was played for the dancing in a one-to-one relationship. I always think of this relationship like the Yin and Yang symbol of Chinese philosophy whereby neither can exist alone and at the centre of each is the seed of the other. The Revival changed that relationship. It began a process of separation from the dancing, and a concentration on just the music allowed for a refinement of its tuning and timing. With the entire focus on the music, things like the "rougher sound" and the poorer tuning became less acceptable. This was the beginning of the music's refinement.

The 'session' was actually a performative context that was imported from London where music was played in pubs instead of people's homes (Hamilton 1999:345). On the other hand, according to my informants, music and set dancing had been occurring at O'Connor's Pub for many decades prior to the Revival. When the Revival did hit Doolin, the focus on the music over the dancing intensified, and 'the pub session' became the natural setting for its expression whether or not dancing accompanied it. In other words, in this context, the music soon took precedence over the dancing.



**Figure 3.2:** Dancing the 'Clare Set'

While this might have helped refine the music itself and it certainly excited many musicians, others have lamented the loss of the dancing. "To me," Coady wrote about the early days, "the dancing of the Clare set [was] an important part of the virility and joy of the music of Clare: there can be a kind of reciprocal ignition between musicians and dancers which is a very exciting thing" (1996:15). But later, as more and more people arrived to hear the music, "[d]ancing became impossible in a jam-packed pub, though there was never any lack of music—often two or three sessions going simultaneously in different corners" (*ibid.*). Fairbairn, an ethnomusicologist, recorded Micho Russell playing a tune the way he would have played it for dancers before the Revival. The tempo was much slower than today's tempos, a change that Fairbairn argues was caused by the initial separation between the dancing and the music (*ibid.*). He told her, "It wouldn't be played as slowly as that in 1950, that would be going back to 1930 maybe, the old days" (in *ibid.*). Hall even argues that "the heyday of Irish traditional music faded from the 1960s onward... when rural music making was severed from dancing" (1999:81). Of course, for musicians like Finn, the opposite was true. For him, this was when traditional Irish music *first* became exciting and its heyday *began*. I would suggest that it's a difference partly explained by a generation gap, and the emergence of new aesthetic sensibilities and meanings attributed to the music.

The emergence of the new 'supergroups', who were treated like pop stars in many ways, helped maintain the Revival in Ireland and even drove it further, whereas its influential counterpart began to fade quickly in the States. During the first years of the 1970s, Bob Dylan, arguably the greatest icon of the folk revival in The U.S., began to sing, not about changing society, but escaping it. At the same time, he was awarded an honorary music degree from Princeton (Foss and Larkin 1976:56-57). This was hardly a subversive icon making a societal folk-critique. Clearly things had changed across the Atlantic just as they were heating up in Ireland. In Scotland, the folk music revival there kept going but instrumental/dance/session music became increasingly popular as musicians began to imitate groups such as The Chieftains and their Scottish equivalents, The Corries (Munroe 1984:80).



The new 'supergroups' were not only treated like pop stars by their fans, but all of the trappings of pop music became embedded in traditional music. The 'bands' went 'into the studio' to record new albums, they were interviewed by music magazines, albums were listed on record charts, and they toured. This was the beginnings of what I would call the 'rock-and-rollisation' of traditional Irish music. The following excerpt from a book on the history of Irish music reads like something out of *Rolling Stone* magazine:

By 1976, other dramatic changes had come about. Planxty had decided to call it a day; Dolores Keane had departed from De Danann, to be replaced by Andy Irvine. And so the wheel continued to turn. Christy Moore, Paul Brady and Mick Hanly pursued solo careers. Prior to going solo Paul Brady joined Andy Irvine for the recording of their much celebrated album for the Mulligan label (Curtis 1994:29).

Some groups took this move towards 'rock-and-rollisation' even more literally and attempted to fuse traditional music with rock and roll. Moving Hearts—an offshoot from Planxty—is an early example (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:138) which would open the doors to a kind of Celtic/pop fusion in later years. According to Bohlman, *diversification* is another central feature of folk revivals (1988:133), and this kind of musical experimentation is a classic example.



**Figure 3.3:** A rock-n-roll style photo-shoot outside O'Connor's in 2003

The Revival brought other diversifying changes as well: new instruments were introduced. The bouzouki, an instrument from Greek traditional music, was introduced by Johnny Moynihan and Andy Irvine. The bouzouki is, put very simplistically, a large guitar-sized mandolin with four sets of strings which can be tuned the same as a mandolin (and fiddle and banjo), or it can be used for 'open tuning'. Johnny told me that they originally saw one in a pawn shop in London, and after some experimentation, found that it worked extremely well with Irish music. It has become a very popular 'backing instrument' today, although Johnny himself dislikes this, preferring to use it for melodies and harmonic accompaniment.

The acoustic guitar came in to the sessions as well, straight out of the Ballad Boom. The guitar is almost always used as a purely 'backing' instrument much like the bouzouki, whereby full chords are strummed. The very notion of 'backing' tunes with any instrument was an entirely new thing during the Revival, and even today, the guitar is a highly contested introduction into traditional music (Commins 2004a). However, the introduction of the guitar during the Revival helped merge the Ballad Boom with the session, and songs accompanied by the guitar became a way to break up the sets of instrumental music. In that sense, its influence on the way sessions are performed today has been enormous. Occasionally, the guitar is used in the same manner as other traditional instruments whereby the melodic line of the tune is played, but the problem is that this is a very quiet way to play the instrument and it simply cannot be heard over other instruments in a session.

Other new instruments that were introduced during The Revival and which are now commonly used are the mandolin and mandola. The 'low whistle' is also a relatively new invention, popular with flute and whistle players for 'slow airs'. Occasionally, one will see instruments as varied as the hurdy-gurdy, the harp (which is increasing in popularity all the time), and more rarely, traditional instruments from other musical traditions. For example, there were two Nepalese lads who lived in Lisdoonvarna who would occasionally play their Nepalese instruments, a fiddle-like instrument and a set of 'tablas', in the sessions. One prolific traditional Irish musician in Doolin would sometimes play the didjereedoo (see track 7), the Australian aboriginal instrument. The djembe, originally of African origin, is not an uncommon percussion instrument now. In the studios, anything goes. Often, modern recording effects—like 'reverb'—are used, and multi-track recording allows for anything to happen on a recording. What's more, every type of instrumentation has been used in recordings from electric guitars and basses to synthesizers and trap-

sets. As can be expected, some people find this utterly offensive while other find it terribly exciting.

It's hard to know when to mark an 'end' to the Revival. Clearly, we are in a different age today. The music has been 'revived', but social relationships have changed again. Some, like Coady, who has the fortunate perspective of an early witness, simply argued that "[i]n a world grown hungry for the authentic and unspoiled there just wasn't enough of Doolin to go round" (1996:15). Things today are often described in terms of a kind of 'afterwards-ness': *post*-modern, or *post*-colonial. I prefer not to talk about the years since the Revival in terms that imply some sort of 'after the fact' mentality—(as in 'The *Post* Revival'). The implication would be that nothing significant has happened since the drama of this period.

Some people mark 'the end' of the Revival sometime between 1978 and 1983 when a series of massive music festivals were held in a farmer's field in between Lisdoonvarna and Doolin. They became known as the Lisdoonvarna Festivals (even though the field in question is technically on the Doolin side of the parish line!), and they became the annual Irish version of Woodstock. They started out as traditional Irish music festivals, a popular venue for the new Revival bands to play. They were a massive success, and as time went on, more rock groups were signed on. By the end, Van Morrison, Rory Gallagher, Emmy Lou Harris, and Jackson Browne had all played there. Unfortunately, in 1983, two things happened that compelled the organisers to end the annual festival. Biker gangs descended on northwest Clare and reportedly caused havoc which the authorities could do nothing about because the roads were too choked with parked cars to get through. Also, despite local warnings, people went swimming off the coast at Doolin in a particularly dangerous spot, and four young men drowned. These events effectively finished the festival (although the original organisers are making a serious attempt to start it back up again today).

Those who suggest that this was the 'end' of the Revival argue that the Lisdoonvarna Festivals had more or less over-commercialised the Revival scene and attempted to create an institution out of the spontaneity of the Revival. These folks argue that a more general kind of commercialised capitalist mentality crept into northwest Clare and undermined the unguarded hospitality that visitors once received. Other Doolin residents are quick to disagree though, and there is no consensus. For some, the festival period was when the Revival really got going and found its stride. Some locals mark the end of the Revival when Micho Russell tragically died in 1994. Peter Curtin, ever the pragmatist, put it to me this way:

I mean, life has changed a good bit *since*. Life is more commercialised in some ways. The musicians as such have regular jobs that you have to pay attention to nine-to-five, and—you know—the spontaneous *session* doesn't happen quite like it used to.

But that's life. Life changes—you know?

Peter is probably right. Life simply changes. In the chapters that follow we will see exactly how life has changed.

## V.

### Conclusions

When we speak of the Revival of the music in this context, we are not really speaking about revitalising anything in northwest Clare itself. The music had survived there, and needed no reviving. A term like 'revival' implies that something from the past is resurrected and expressed in the present (Jabbour 1993:xii). This sense of 'pastness' was being sought out by the flood of musicians, Irish music connoisseurs and interested tourists that came to Doolin and northwest Clare during this period, but the music had existed continuously there. For locals, it was not in the past. It had in fact always existed in the present.

The Revival is not without its counterparts in other English-speaking countries, and it's not even the first time that attempts have been made to 'revive' traditional Irish music<sup>6</sup>. In the early 1800s, Irish harping was revived through the medium of festivals and musical organisations in both Belfast and Dublin (Blaustein 1993:268). Captain Francis O'Neill, an Irish-American police captain from Chicago collected and published his now famous *Music of Ireland: Eighteen Hundred and Fifty Melodies* in 1903<sup>7</sup> (Meek 1999:43). And of course, the creation of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* was another such attempt to revive the music. On the one hand, the Revival in northwest Clare was almost certainly, though indirectly, influenced by organisational or academic attempts to revive folk music(s) elsewhere. It's nearly impossible to discern exactly what motivated people in other countries to take an initial interest in Irish music, but many were firstly drawn to it via revivals of other folk musics.

The Revival that began to descend upon northwest Clare in the late 1960s was of a different nature to its counterparts elsewhere. There was no local organising body that made an attempt to stir up interest. This was no academic endeavour, or

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<sup>6</sup> The revival of Irish Gaelic is no doubt also related to the revival of Irish music, but this relationship is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

<sup>7</sup> Today, many musicians will simply call this well-thumbed collection "O'Neill's book", or when referring to the later summarised edition of 1001 tunes, "the 1001".

one with an overt political message. It was in a sense, organic, which was undoubtedly the attraction for many people. It felt 'authentic'. Others have suggested that, far from being isolated events, twentieth century urban folk revivals are descended from a 200 year history of romanticism of the rural musics in the West (Allen 1981:71), which are part and parcel of the increased disillusionment of urban-modern-commercial hegemony, a search for the rural-idyll and its supposedly organic, community-based "authenticity" (Allen 1981:78, Blaustein 1993:272.).

For some, this idyllic romance may have links to an ethnic identification with the particular music that's being revived. People who identify themselves as Irish-Americans for example may feel a strong link to the 'Irish' portion of a self constructed hyphenated identity. The music might be one of many markers of that identification. For others, with no ancestral attachment to Ireland, this music and the internationalised traditional Irish music 'public' that was formed by the Revival might have replaced a lost sense of "communal relationships grounded in kinship and territoriality" (Blaustein 1993:271). In other words, an association with a chosen folk music, even if it is 'someone else's' music, can bring one into the fold of a new kind of 'community' of like-minded individuals. This is especially true for those who learn the music and can even pass it on to others. One is drawn into, and becomes part of, that tradition (see chapter 8).

As Livingston has suggested, the specific motivations for involving oneself in a musical revival are infinitely variable (1999:73). But like Bohlman (1988:130-135), she suggests that music revivals are "a particular class of musical phenomenon" (Livingston 1999:69) which have similar characteristics cross-culturally. She has created a loose 'model of musical revivals', pointing out that the following elements are necessary for defining a revival:

1. an individual or small group of "core revivalists"
2. revival informants and/or original sources (historical sound recordings)
3. a revivalist ideology and discourse
4. a group of followers which form the basis of a revivalist community
5. revivalist activities (organisations, festivals, competitions)
6. non-profit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market (*ibid.*).

In a footnote, she states that the sixth element is more common to societies with a highly developed market economy (*ibid.*:82). As I have shown in this chapter, the Revival of traditional music in Ireland fits her model except on one account. She argues that "one of the most important features of music revivals" (*ibid.*:70) is her



first criterion whereby one individual, or a handful of individuals form what she calls the 'core revivalists' who "almost always come from the ranks of the middle class as scholars, professional or amateur musicians, dilettantes, and those involved with the music industry" (*ibid.*). In Ireland, there were certainly folkloristic collectors of traditional Irish music before the Revival hit places like Doolin such as Seamus Ennis and Ciarán Mac Mathúna. Indeed, their early interest helped keep it alive, but their impact was minimal outside the already existing 'community' of traditional music connoisseurs in Ireland. More influential perhaps were Ó Riada's innovations and his formation of what was to become the traditional Irish super-group, The Chieftains. But it would be pushing the argument too much to suggest that these middle class scholar-musicians lay at the core and were the *cause* of the Revival.

The changing foundations of Irish society were certainly a factor as well. As McCarthy has pointed out, a "growing tolerance for pluralism in society in general was reflected in the emergence and broad acceptance of a variety of musical traditions, some of which had previously played a narrow role... Traditional music was one aspect of Irish musical heritage that was revitalised in this era" (1999:140).

The issue of authenticity in relation to the Revival is clarified to some extent by Connell and Gibson's distinction between 'authenticity' and 'credibility' (2003:43-44). A folk music can be perceived to be 'authentic' when it reaches into, and maintains a relationship with, the past, whereas

regions of dynamism and creativity, places perceived to be the origins of novel sounds, become credible as sites of innovation, and subsequently become authentic, as they are increasingly depicted in media and imaginations in relation to music. Yet places to which music has been linked in this kind of way can become dated, where 'scenes' have come and gone... Authenticity was constantly sought by embedding music in place, yet such efforts never guaranteed commercial or critical longevity (*ibid.*:44).

During the Revival period Doolin became a site of creativity, one that gained 'credibility' and a sense of authenticity. To some extent, during the period since the Revival, the longevity of the 'Doolin scene' has been questioned. Doolin is now world-famous and is very much a commercial success-story, but in traditional Irish music 'circles' in neighbouring towns and villages, it is not uncommon to hear negative assessments about its music scene. Doolin's intense popularity during the Revival and its subsequent popularity amongst mass tourists (chapter 5) lend itself to this negative stereotyping, but given the seasonal variation, these views are largely based on the summertime Doolin.

The Revival had profound effects on northwest Clare and Doolin in particular. In the rest of this thesis, I will analyse those effects. First, the Revival 'put Doolin on the map' both metaphorically and indeed literally (chapter 4). Second, the influx of tourists only grew, and as the local population began to take advantage of this new economic opportunity that was arriving on their doorsteps by building up a tourist infrastructure, Doolin began to attract a less specialised mass tourist market (chapter 5). Thirdly, some visitors decided to settle in the area and become part of the community (chapters 6 and 8). Fourthly, all of these factors have had dramatic effects on the performance of traditional Irish music in Doolin (chapter 7). Fifth, in chapters 7 and 9, the important but loaded discourse surrounding the notion of 'authenticity' will be analysed in detail. Finally, underlying all of these elements is the seasonal variation in tourism and consequently, in musical performances.

## Chapter Four—The Celtic Tiger

When I was a kid, just down the other side of that bridge, my grandfather—God Rest Him—had built a little piggery to rear a few little pigs... and like, 40 years later, I end up with a little office down there with about 8 computers in it and about 10 printers and a huge server inside the same space, d'y'know? So, you've gone from pigs to computers in 40 years!

—Peter Curtin

[U]nlike persons, whose creation precedes naming, places come into being out of spaces by being named.

—Charles O. Frake (1996:235)

### I.

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the complex issues that surround a recent rush towards an accelerated 'modernity', especially in Doolin. As I have shown in the previous chapters, even local places in Ireland were always 'globalized' to some extent, with deeply interactive relationships with other nations and peoples. It is one example of how our earlier perspectives, relying first and foremost on the concept of the nation, are too bounded. "Much of social science," writes Sassen, "has operated with the assumption of the nation-state as a container, representing a unified spatiotemporality. Much of history, however, has failed to confirm this assumption" (2001:260).

As I have detailed in chapters 2 and 3, connections between Ireland and the rest of the English speaking world have been durable for well over a century. Following the Great Famine, the Irish emigrated especially to England, Australia, and America, and an economic and cultural connection between these countries has remained important ever since. What's more, Irish 'culture' has not been conterminous with the isle of Ireland either. The fact that these processes have quickened more recently veils the fact that, although to a lesser extent, Ireland was always 'globalised'. During the Revival, these global connections became a two-way street as tourists began to come back into Ireland. In this chapter, I will focus on the development of the tourism industry and how this quasi-created the external 'idea' of Doolin, and allowed for the introduction of mass tourism into the locale. During this Celtic Tiger period, the trickle of people coming to Ireland became a flood.

## II.

### Socio-economic Backdrop

To say that Ireland has changed during the 1990s, a period that economists have called 'the Celtic Tiger' (a name derived from the burgeoning 'Asian Tiger' economies of Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore), is to understate the drama of the last decade. To contextualise the remarkable growth in the Irish economy during the 1990s, we can compare it to the U.S. and the rest of Europe. The U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an average of 2.1 percent per year during the 1990s, and caused "unrestrained celebration", while the average rate of growth for the Irish GDP during the same period was a staggering 6.3 percent (Allen 2000:9). Likewise, in the rest of Europe, the average rate of growth in the tourism industry alone was around 3 percent, while it grew at nearly 12 percent in Ireland (Deegan and Dineen 2000:163). Not only did this unprecedented economic prosperity reverse the long-standing pattern of emigration, but for the first time in Irish history, non-Irish asylum-seekers and economic migrants were arriving in increasing numbers. Like an intensified version of the 1960s, a frenetic sense of excitement caused by economic growth gripped the country. As Allen has written, "Ireland has reached its own modernity at a pace that has left many with a sense of dizziness" (2000:11).

For the same reason that it is difficult to delineate the end of the Revival period of social history in Doolin, it is almost as difficult to mark the beginning of the Celtic Tiger. In one sense though, it is easier: the Celtic Tiger specifically describes a period of national *economic* growth that led to rapid social changes throughout Ireland, and we can take a marker from the economists' timelines to discuss a 'beginning'. Gottheil argues that by "the latter half of the 1990s... it looked as if a full-blown economic tiger might be at large, appearing seemingly out of nowhere" (2003:730). Allen puts a more precise date on it, stating that it was "baptised in 1994" (2000:9).

Of course, its roots lay much further back. Two important developments, initiated decades earlier, led to the explosion of recent economic prosperity in Ireland. First and foremost, in order to jump start industrialisation in Ireland, a new economic strategy was employed as early as 1958, one that Gottheil has called "industrialization-by-invitation" (2003:725). Through a series of grants and tax shelters, and by allowing companies to repatriate all of their profits without investing in Ireland, the government lured multinationals to set up shop in Ireland (*ibid.*). The simple reasoning behind the new strategy was to provide employment for Irish workers. A secondary development was Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. Ireland was forced to

dismantle all protective tariffs between itself and other EEC countries, which it completed by 1977, and as Gottheil argues, this “represented a renewed commitment to... industrialization-by-invitation” policies (*ibid.*:727). The immediate effects were mostly negative. Irish firms went under and emigration picked up again as jobs disappeared (*ibid.*) O’Grada has simply labelled this period “More doom and gloom” (1997:31). However, the benefits of joining the EEC, later the European Union (EU), came in the form of massive grants designed to build up Irish infrastructure. Essentially, Ireland was suddenly able to draw on huge amounts of EU money. In fact, by 1993, over 3 percent of Ireland’s gross national product was drawn from EU coffers (Gottheil 2003:728).

By the mid-1990s, the industrialization-by-invitation strategy reached a kind of critical mass. Most of the multinational companies that moved to Ireland were based in the United States, and a “cluster effect” occurred whereby rival companies in the same industry (computers are a good example) set up shop in Ireland in order to be competitive in the EU market (*ibid.*:731). Amazingly, by 2002, a United Nations report was able to conclude that Ireland was, per capita, the fourth richest nation in the world (O’Toole 2002:12).

	FDI as % of GNP			FDI as % of capital formation		
	1980	1990	1999	1980	1990	1999
Ireland	1	1	20		6	88
South Korea	0	0	2	0	1	9
Malaysia	4	5	2	12	16	9
Singapore	8	15	8	23	41	25
Thailand	1	3	5	2	7	24

Source: *World Bank Report*, 2001 as cited in (O’Toole 2002:12)

**Figure 4.1:** Foreign Direct Investment as a % of GDP and Capital Formation

But can the strength of the Celtic Tiger be trusted? Underlying the intense dependence on foreign direct investment, especially from the U.S., is the fact that profits are still largely repatriated out of the country (O’Grada 1997:33). Allen reports that even up to 1997 according to ‘official’ numbers, (which it must be said can be exaggerated to some extent), U.S. multinationals made a return of 25 percent on their corporate investments in Ireland (2000:60). This is three times as much as they made in Spain and five times what they made in Britain (*ibid.*). The imbalance that repatriated profits creates has even led some to suggest that a second economic profile should be created, one that factors out the distortions it causes (O’Grada 1997:33). Industrialization-by-invitation is by no means a stable strategy, and many fear that the ‘roar’ of the Celtic Tiger has already turned into a ‘whimper’ (Crawford 2003:3). It is not uncommon to read headlines

like "The Myth of the Celtic Tiger" (Woods 2002:15) or "The Celtic Tiger is Dead, but We're Still Smiling..." (Crawford 2003:3) in recent Irish newspapers.

More importantly, many negative effects have inadvertently resulted from the success of the Celtic Tiger. In 2002, in an EU survey of cost-of-living in the Euro-zone countries, Ireland was the second most expensive country, only after Finland (King 2002:1). A recent paper produced by two Queen's University Belfast sociologists showed that prosperity has also left many behind, and indeed, in poverty (as reported in Black 2002:19). The study, which focused on thirty suburban families in Dublin, found that four out of five families lived below the poverty line (*ibid.*). Furthermore, others have reported that 90 percent of public investment is absorbed in or around the eastern urban "axis of Belfast, Dublin and Wexford" (Siggins 2003:2). The western counties have benefited far less than their eastern counterparts.

The Celtic Tiger then, has been anything but democratic. It has, in effect, created huge regional disparities and a massive chasm between the rich and the poor. According to Mac Laughlin, a new kind of bourgeoisie has emerged (1997:4), and "[b]ecause of the disenchantment with the life lived in Ireland prior to the Sixties, this new middle class has manipulated the country's image" (*ibid.*). The 'image' of this new bourgeois Ireland, according to Mac Laughlin, excludes depictions of poverty and rurality in favour of "the ways of thinking of their metropolitan and European 'betters'... [T]hey have become... 'wonderfully detached' from their own traditions and their own history" (*ibid.*:5).

What's more, there are signs that the future of Celtic Tiger fortunes are at least under significant pressure. This is an inevitable result of the Irish economy's intimate ties with U.S. corporate investment. According to Keenan, the recent downturn in the U.S. economy since 2001 has sent serious shockwaves into the Irish economy across the Atlantic (2003:19). Some pundits are less pessimistic, and suggest that this is simply a return to a 'normalised' economy than it is a 'real' recession (*ibid.*). Either way, it may in fact leave the future bereft of both financial growth as well as a clear sense of what it means to be 'Irish'.

So, the economic 'reading' of the Celtic Tiger has been, to put it mildly, a mixed bag. So has the assessment of the social changes that have accompanied it. All of these issues are popular topics for conversation in Doolin and elsewhere in Ireland. There are many theories about government corruption and the power of the new Celtic-Tiger-upper-class. Many people told me that they suspect that the recent change-over to the Euro currency gave the government, and profiteering retailers and publicans, the excuse to artificially raise prices. Letters to the Editor in the national newspapers also reflect many of these concerns

(Dooley 2002:15). Despite this widespread cynicism, a recent 'quality of life' survey suggests that the Irish are happier than ever before (Crawford 2003:3).

### III.

#### **Tourism from the late 1980's to the Present**

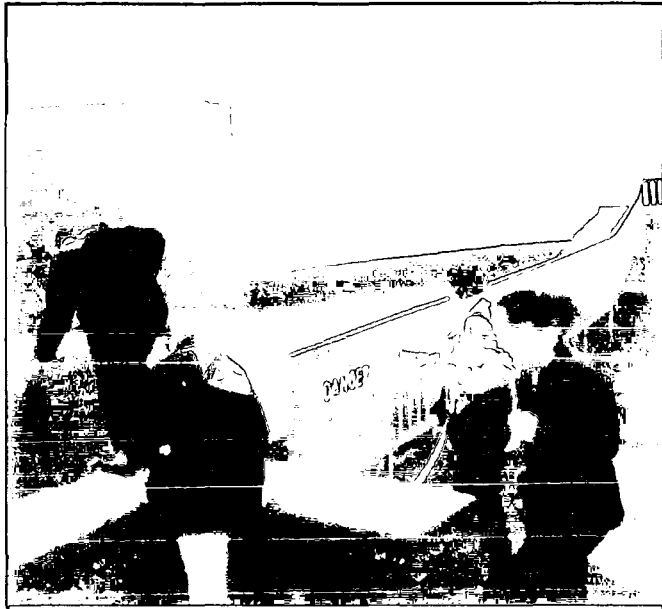
The growth of tourism has mirrored the general growth of the economy during the Celtic Tiger period. As stated earlier, by 2000, the average rate of growth in the tourism industry has run at around twelve percent since the early 1990s (Deegan and Dineen 2000:163). Indeed, this phenomenal growth in the tourism sector contributed significantly to the overall economy. Thirty-five percent of jobs created between 1987 and 1994 were in the tourism sector (Deegan and Dineen 1997:78). The industry's contribution to the national GNP rose from four to 4.6 percent between 1986 and 1996, which is remarkable given the emergence of the 'tiger' economy during the tail end of that ten year period (Deegan and Dineen 2000:169).

Internal and external factors contributed to this exceptional growth in the tourist industry. Irish governmental policies changed significantly in the late 1980s, and a renewed focus on developing tourism materialised. As Deegan and Dineen suggest, the government seemed to be grasping at straws at the time in light of bleak outlooks in most other industries (*ibid.*:164). Two significant changes occurred in the late 1980s. First, an independent, low-cost airline called RyanAir was allowed to begin operations which immediately increased traffic between the UK and Ireland (*ibid.*). The second and more important factor has to do with the EU investments. Some EU funds were drawn specifically to develop Irish tourism, and between 1989 and 1993 alone, the EU funded approximately 53 percent of the industry's development (*ibid.*:165). To say the least, these changes had the desired effect. According to a report prepared by an economic consultancy agency, between 1985 and 2000, visitor numbers rose from under two million to more than six million annually (Tansey *et al* 2002).

Not only did more and more tourists come to Ireland during the 1990s, but each year visitors spent increasingly large amounts of money (*ibid.*). As a corollary of this growth, tourism provided more and more employment opportunities. By 2001, approximately 137,000 people were officially employed in the tourist industry in Ireland, making it the sixth largest employer in the nation, ahead of farming (*ibid.*). According to the report by Tansey *et al*, the southern and western regions account for approximately one quarter of the population, but generated nearly two-fifths of the total tourism revenue (*ibid.*). So, despite the overall regional imbalance in investments throughout the Celtic

Tiger period with an extreme bias towards the eastern part of the nation, tourism helped balance out some of these regional disparities.

Tourism is a sensitive industry however. In 2001, tourist numbers declined slightly from the previous year (Ingle 2002:3). It was the first of a number of indicators that signalled a potential future decline in the industry. In 2002, the overall numbers of tourists increased, but there were significantly less North American tourists, and it is the North Americans who spend most, so actual profits



**Figure 4.2: Tourists at the Cliffs**

from tourism were down (*ibid.*). Currently, a number of factors are hurting tourism in Ireland, which could signal an overall future decline in the industry, or it might be considered a temporary glitch. It's too early to tell. The increasing cost of goods and services in Ireland and the strengthening of the Euro over the U.S. Dollar have made Ireland less attractive to North American visitors. The Minister for Tourism, John O'Donoghue, warned in 2002 that the tourism industry was "pricing itself out of the market" (as quoted in Melia 2002:1). Moreover, the introduction of the Euro meant that relative prices within Europe are more transparent to European visitors than they were before when one had to convert currencies in order to compare prices. Now visitors from Continental Europe quickly realise that their money buys much less in Ireland than it does at home. Other extraneous factors such as the foot-and mouth crisis in 2001, the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in America, the World Cup in 2002, and the second war in Iraq in 2003 and continued conflict there seem to have kept tourists at home. A quick survey of newspaper articles on the topic in 2002 and 2003 reveals the level of concern that this downturn has caused, but most of them blame the internal problem of inflation rather than external factors.

### **The Regional Promotion of Tourism**

A hierarchy of tourism bodies currently exists in Ireland. As part of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, two bodies began to market and oversee the tourism industry for the whole isle of Ireland, north and south. The first, which



promotes Ireland as a tourist destination overseas, is called Tourism Ireland ("About Tourism Ireland"). The mission of Fáilte Ireland (formerly called Bord Fáilte) is to promote the 'tourism product' within the island, and to coordinate national, regional and local tourist concerns ("Fáilte Ireland: About Us"). Beneath this now unified island bureaucratic structure, seven regional boards focus on promoting 'tourism products' within their particular regions. County Clare is subsumed under 'the Shannon Region' which centres around Shannon airport ("The Daily Adventure"). It is the remit of a board called Shannon Development to promote general economic development within this region, and that remit includes tourism. Independent, locally organised town and village promotion bodies often work to promote particular communities within these regional tourism bodies. Interestingly, the borders of these 'tourism regions' do not necessarily coincide with county borders. I found that one's county is an extremely important personal identification for permanent residents in northwest Clare, but the Shannon region for example, cuts part way into counties Offaly, Tipperary and Kerry and subsumes all of counties Limerick and Clare (*ibid.*). What the region does centre on is Shannon Airport.

I met with Shannon Development's Tourism Development Manager one day and asked him what was meant by a 'tourism product'. He gave me a number of examples such as the region's golf courses, Bunratty Castle, various heritage centres, and popular landscapes like the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher. 'Tourism products' then are specific sites that can be taken 'of a piece' and promoted. Between these specific 'products', they also try to use more conceptual 'themes' in their promotional literature. He told me that the region's 'rurality' is used as a selling point especially for attracting urban tourists who might be looking to experience a laid-back holiday. He also pointed out that images of water are featured in tourist brochures as well since the region is bordered on the west by the Atlantic coastline, and the broad Shannon River cuts through its centre.

Traditional Irish music falls under a section called "Other Categories" in their literature ("Ireland's Shannon Region" 2002-2003:95-101). Shannon Development's Tourism Manager told me that the body has found traditional music more difficult to market than other 'products' like golf courses since it is problematic to ensure that a session will occur in a particular place a year or so in advance. They have, however, created a flier called "The Shannon Region Traditional Irish Music Pubs" (2002-2003) in which weekly session schedules at various pubs around the region are listed. In previous years, this "programme" as they call it, was sponsored by Guinness and was called "The Shannon Region Guinness Traditional Irish Music Pubs" ("Ireland's Shannon Region" 2002-

2003:100, my italics), but I was told that Guinness pulled its funding because there were no additional profits to be made from the promotion. Some pubs have chosen not to participate, presumably for the same reasons. For example, despite the fact that Doolin's pubs are so well known for their sessions, only one Doolin pub was listed in the 2001-2002 guide, and they pulled their name from the list in 2002-2003, leaving Doolin completely out of the guide.

### **The Recent Development of Tourism in Doolin**

Before the extraordinary growth of the general economy and tourism during the Celtic Tiger era, a few developments in Doolin's tourism 'industry'<sup>1</sup> started to occur, especially in the 1980's. In the early 1980's, a local woman named Josephine Moloney met numerous times with Bord Fáilte and persuaded them to include Doolin on the organisation's holiday maps. It was in 1982 that Doolin was included for the first time on the Ordinance Survey maps as well (Danaher 2002:22). In this very literal way, Doolin was 'put on the map'. This is another example of how the local actions of individuals can interact and influence the 'structure' at key points in the historical development of a place. Two years later, Josephine and another woman, Helen Browne, formed the Doolin Development Company which aimed to promote Doolin tourism interests<sup>2</sup> (*ibid.*).

In 1987, the owners of the Doolin Hostel in Fisherstreet convinced *Bus Eireann*, the national bus service, to make Doolin a serviced destination (*ibid.*). It began originally as an extension of the bus service to neighbouring Lisdoonvarna from Limerick (McIntyre 2004: personal communication). A bus ran once a day in and out of Doolin four days a week. Three years later, Doolin was included on the timetables of the national 'Expressway Network' as its own destination (*ibid.*). By 2003, there were 3 daily services year-round and an additional 4 services to handle the increasing tourist traffic in the summertime (*ibid.*). Like most things in Doolin then, the bus service reflects the seasonality of tourism in the area.

The development of local tourism interests grew at a phenomenal rate in the 1990's<sup>3</sup>. Since 1991, an estimated 93 new buildings were constructed in the immediate area in and around Doolin, and almost half of those were devoted, at least in part, to commercial activities. More are being built at present, and planning permission for several others have been approved. Significantly, at the

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<sup>1</sup> The tourism interests in Doolin cannot be called an 'industry' as such since there has been a non-centralised, laissez-faire approach to infrastructural development and tourism marketing until relatively recently.

<sup>2</sup> Significantly, this organisation, which was later renamed the Doolin Tourism Co-operative, is by far the most influential and far-reaching local committee in Doolin today, a village that is run on less than a dozen small voluntary committees, not on a formal political structure like a 'village council'.

<sup>3</sup> The following figures are based on a map created by Matty Shannon, a local man who personally took a census of the main part of Killilagh Parish in 1991 in order to prove that the village had a high enough population to host its own local football team. He updated his figures recently to include all of the new development and changes in the local population of the area for a local development plan submitted to the Clare County Council in June of 2003.



same time, the permanent population of the area has remained relatively stable, growing from roughly 510 to around 570 permanent residents. In 1988, one bed & breakfast proprietor told me that there were five small B&Bs in Doolin, two in Fisherstreet and three in the Roadford part of the village. Now, there are around fifty, and they typically have at least four or five rooms. Four hostels now cater to tourists in Doolin too, as well as two campgrounds. Additionally, some of the B&Bs and hostels will rent out a space in their back fields for overflow campers in the summer.

It is impossible to accurately calculate the 'carrying-capacity' of tourists in Doolin since the campgrounds (and overflow camping) can take in large and indefinite numbers of campers, but excluding the campgrounds, Doolin currently has an estimated 770 tourist-beds (up from roughly 375 beds in 1991). This is



**Figure 4.3:** Expanding Doolin's carrying capacity

well over the permanent resident population of around 570 villagers, and if one were to venture a guess at how many people could stay in Doolin's campgrounds and 'back fields', the figures at the height of the tourist season in the summer would easily double that of the

local population. In other words, during the busiest time of the year, generally June through August, when it's difficult to find a place to sleep in or around Doolin, up to two out of every three people staying in Doolin are visitors. And that doesn't include those tourists who take daytrips to Doolin from other neighbouring towns and villages, who pass through for an afternoon on their way to somewhere else, domestic tourists from neighbouring towns and villages, and tourists who stop through for an hour or two as part of a packaged coach tour. During an afternoon saunter through the village in July then, one might only see the occasional permanent resident amidst the crowds of tourists. The seasonality of this picture is dramatic. In the depths of the winter of 2002-2003, only four B&Bs were open for business, and even these were rarely full. Due to the poor weather, camping is not an option, and the two hostels that stayed open only took in small numbers. Comparatively though, neighbouring towns like Lahinch (which has been intensively built up with summer resort cottages and hotels instead of B&Bs) resemble ghost towns<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> I am told that during this last year, two small hotels have sprung up in Doolin, which might hail a significant change in the kind of accommodation in Doolin. However, residents who participated in a series of developmental meetings in the spring of 2003 wanted to emphatically resist attempts to build hotels because it wasn't "in character" with the locale.

Other tourist-oriented businesses grew up around the burgeoning 'mass' tourist industry in the 1990s. Numerous craft/gift shops opened. Two traditional music shops now run successful businesses in the Fisherstreet end of Doolin selling CDs, tapes, books and traditional instruments and supplies. A number of restaurants, serving international and local cuisines, have opened in and around the village. To say the least, a tourist-oriented business infrastructure was built up rather rapidly during the last twenty years, and extant buildings were re-built for tourism purposes as well. Today, every building along the main road in the Fisherstreet section of Doolin houses one type of business or another: B&Bs, craft and music shops, a grocers, a coffee shop, a sweater shop, and a bookstore<sup>5</sup>. The pubs expanded over the years as well to accommodate the increasingly large crowds. As many people said to us when we lived there, Doolin looked absolutely different even ten or fifteen years before. The tourist-oriented build-up has in fact changed the very landscape.

Again, seasonality comes into play. Most shops and restaurants close sometime in October or November and don't reopen until March or April. Likewise, most touristed pubs in northwest Clare close off whole rooms for the winter. O'Connor's Pub for example, reduces its carrying capacity by about two thirds in the wintertime by closing off the more recent additions. In a very physical sense then, the village's interior spaces in the wintertime return to an earlier, pre-tourist context.

Interestingly, the chronology of the development of the tourism build-up in Doolin reveals its relative strength compared to Ireland in general. The fact that these developments were gaining momentum as early as the early 1980s goes to show that Doolin was able to cash in on an already extant tourist population when, at the same time, the rest of the country only started to realise that tourism was a potential economic boon.

As businesses developed in Doolin itself, it was natural that regional relationships with other tourist-interests developed as well. O'Connor's Pub, for example, began to cater to packaged coach tours, and built up relationships with companies who needed somewhere to stop for meals<sup>6</sup>. When the pub was sold to its present owner, those relationships were built up further, and today, at the height of the tourist season, it is not unusual for even six or seven coaches to stop at the pub to feed their customers during the daytime. Some coach tour

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<sup>5</sup> This fact is in opposition to the mythico-factual writings of the tourist guidebooks. The 2003 edition of *Frommer's: Ireland* for example describes Fisherstreet as "a row of thatched fisherman's cottages" (Kelleher 2003:381). One quick glance along Fisherstreet would disconfirm this statement, and at best it is misleading. If it is an honest depiction, then one can only assume that that entry must have been written years ago and copied from one years' guide to the next.

<sup>6</sup> In the auld days, food was never served in the pubs. I was told that it used be embarrassing for locals to be seen eating food in a pub because it implied that one's domestic life was either inadequate or 'on the rocks'. So, serving food in general was another expansion of the tourist trade.

companies originate as far away as Dublin, but most have a more regional base like Galway or Ennis. Many of the buses can carry up to fifty passengers, and the business that they provide is highly profitable. A typical tour group will be offloaded in Doolin for an hour or more, eat lunch at the pub, do some shopping at the gift shops, and then move on. Coach drivers are asked to call in the morning to let the pub staff know how many tourists they are carrying that day, and over time, these daily encounters between the coach drivers, tour-guides, publicans and the pub staff develop into personal relationships (see chapter 5 for a detailed discussion).

In proportion to the amount of money coach tourists leave in Doolin, their time there is very short, their impact is minimal, and for some publicans and shopkeepers, they are a consistent source of income. There's an irony about coach tourists. Many other tourists belittle those who take coach tours as the very representation of the powers that supposedly 'ruin' places like Doolin. To generalise a bit, young backpacking tourists in particular have a tendency to decry the commercialising effect of coach tours, when in fact, coach tourists easily spend more money in the locale for the amount of time they stay. In contrast, it is the backpacking tourists who spend less and are more inclined to 'invade' the 'backstage' areas of the village much to the locals' chagrin.

The coach tour business is technically year-round in the sense that packaged tours come through Doolin even in the winter. But it is a seasonal business for all intents and purposes. After October, it was not uncommon for only one small coach per day with 15 or so tourists to stop into O'Connor's Pub for lunch, and it wasn't until late February that things picked up again.

Regional relationships between B&Bs were cultivated over the years, too. An informal but vital system of recommendations has been created between B&B proprietors in other parts of Ireland. One B&B proprietor explained how this worked.

That usually starts when I have someone come in and says, "I just stayed in Clifden and this is a really nice place". And "here's some cards". And then you start—and then you start talking to them over the phone. And most of these places that I recommend, I haven't met the people. I've only spoken to them on the phone... And it's good to only have one in a place. In a place that's really busy like Clifden or Dingle, you might have two. But you stay really faithful to those two. They'll recommend you, too. But if they find out that you're recommending four or five, it just doesn't work. You have to stick to one or two.

In a sense, these relationships act to further structure the tourism industry in various communities. Relationships are built up between tourist 'hot-spots', and

recommendations are given out to new tourists to visit those spots, building the word-of-mouth reputation of those destinations.

#### IV.

#### **The Village That Wasn't There**

"Doolin isn't even a real village anyway," my friend Jerry said to me once. It was a refrain that I would hear over and over again throughout my time in Doolin. To some extent it's the truth. Jamesie told me what "Doolin" literally meant:

"Doolin" is—ah—if you just cross over the river, where the Aillee River Hostel is, well, if you just go to the back of that—to the second field up, the field up there, well, that's called "Doolin Field". Well, that's Doolin itself. That is actually where Doolin is.

Doolin is literally the name of a single townland on the western edge of Killilagh Parish, but, as Jamesie went on to explain, the name for this one townland eventually subsumed the name of the whole village<sup>7</sup>. The first map below shows the borders of Killilagh parish and the townlands within it. Doolin Townland is highlighted in green. (Note that there is also a townland called Killilagh, and this is where the old parish church, now in ruins, stands).

The issue of names is much more complicated though than the discrepancy between the parish name (Killilagh) and the village name (Doolin). Fisherstreet bears most resemblance to the Anglo-American stereotype of a village with an assemblage of buildings along a street front. In fact, according to one travel guide, Doolin is also called "Fisherstreet on some maps" (Callan *et al* 2002:447), and one older travel guide, describing O'Connor's Pub states, "The permanent joke about this delightful spot is that it isn't in Doolin at all... O'Connor's stands in Fisher Street, half a mile from the coast" (Bryant 1979[1977]:170). Buildings are also clustered around the bridges at two other parts of the village, called Fitz's Cross and Roadford, but here they are much more dispersed. There is also an even more dispersed collection of buildings in a place colloquially called Garrihy's Cross at the far bottom right corner of the second map. People use these terms in regular conversation all the time. They also use the various townland names to describe specific locations. Finally, colloquial names are also used. The word 'cross' indicates crossroads, and often these places are specified by giving specific crossroads the name of a prominent local who lives there. For example, two of the four 'sub-villages' in the second map use these kinds of labels

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<sup>7</sup> The maps in Chapter 1 show where Killilagh Parish is located within county Clare.



(named after The Fitzgerald family and the Garrihy family). So local knowledge of parish nomenclature is complicated and extensive, including both official townland names and colloquial names.

The concentration of buildings in the auld days, before much of the construction related to the modern tourist industry occurred, was centred around Fisherstreet and Roadford. Conrad Arensberg also made the distinction between Doolin and Lough (townlands 38 and 39 on the second map) where he stayed for several months in the 1930s (1959[1937]:20). A very few isolated farmsteads and cottages were scattered around the rest of the parish.

Since the massive developments in the last fifteen to twenty years especially, buildings have sprung up in a pattern that the county bureaucrats call ‘ribbon development’. In other words, individuals have steadily built their new homes and businesses on their previously owned properties throughout the parish, mostly along the major roads. The resulting effect is a confetti of buildings across the countryside rather than a concentration in one location. Many tourists find this disorienting after having heard about the ‘village’ of Doolin, only to find nothing that they think resembles a ‘village’.

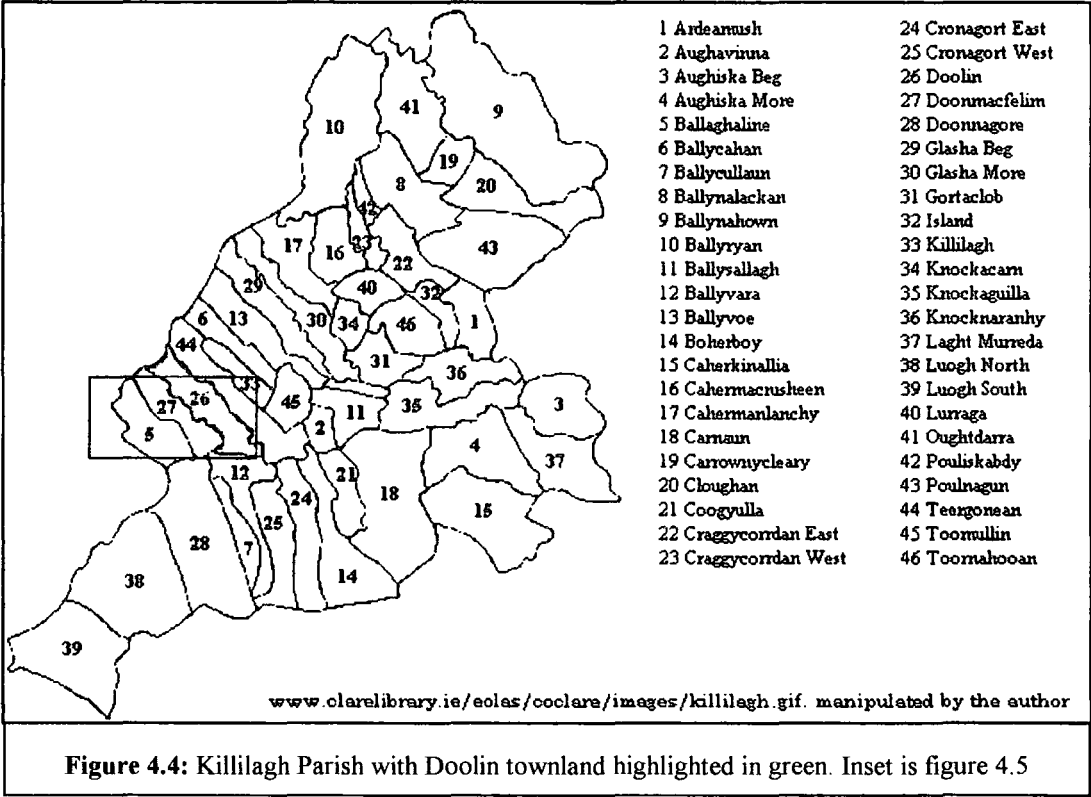
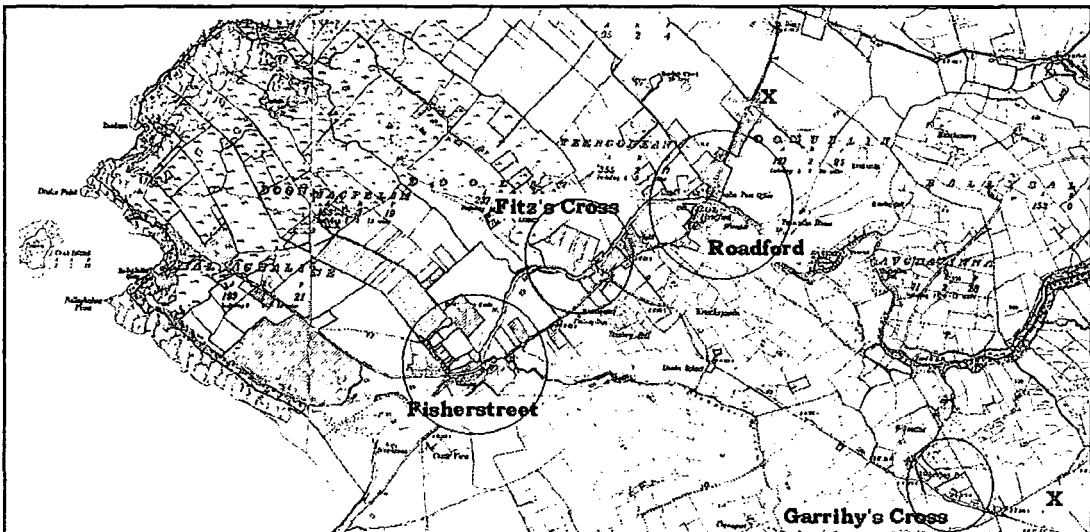


Figure 4.4: Killilagh Parish with Doolin townland highlighted in green. Inset is figure 4.5

The map below details the area in the rectangle in the map above. This is where the highest concentration of buildings in Doolin are situated, and associatively, this is also where most of the tourist traffic is concentrated<sup>8</sup>. I have circled the four biggest concentrations of buildings, what are often called 'sub-villages', within Doolin. Note that this is actually a fairly small portion of Killilagh parish. What's more, the signs that imply that one is now entering Doolin (shown as X's on the map below) all appear within this smaller area, leading to further confusion about where 'Doolin' actually is.



**Figure 4.5:** The main concentrations of buildings. The X's are roadsigns for Doolin

In addition, the lack of clearly delineated concentrations of buildings means that even locals have had a difficult time deciding what is or is not a 'sub-village'. During a series of meetings in 2003 to create a 'development plan' for the village, a whole debate emerged about whether Doolin had three 'sub-villages' or four. The matter was discussed publicly, and the community was divided between a 'three-sub-villages' camp and a 'four-sub-villages' camp. Finally, a decision was made that it consisted of four sub-villages, not three, and this was approved by vote. These four sub-villages (Fisherstreet, Roadford, Fitz's Cross and Garrihy's Cross, indicated on the map above) were approved to be the focus of future zoning and development. Furthermore, there was a lengthy debate about what the 'character' of the village is, and what it should become. It even led to a kind of 'semantic deliberation about the word 'character'. 'Is it what it is now?' Or 'is it was it might be in the future?' No clear answers emerged however. Overall though, this process was a self-conscious self-construction of the 'place' of Doolin.

<sup>8</sup> The coloured areas indicate areas that the county council has proposed for future commercial (purple) and residential (orange) zoning. The blue and green areas are public spaces (which include the churches and a potential 'green area' along the shoreline). These proposed zones were based on where most of the villages' buildings already were. It was the council's intention to concentrate these four areas even further to stem 'ribbon development.'



The build-up of the tourist infrastructure has come at some cost though. The scattering of modern-style buildings across the valley's landscape, what is sometimes called 'ribbon-development', has changed the very 'look' of the village. Locals sometimes complain to each other about it, even though many of them have themselves been a part of this overall development. And it is something that tourists have noted with some disappointment. When I asked "how might Doolin be improved?" in a survey of tourists during the summer months of 2003, overwhelmingly, respondents wanted Doolin to avoid getting "too built up and touristy" as one respondent wrote. Other tourists wrote comments like "Keep it as it is – stop housing development", "No more building!! –esp. big houses/B&Bs which are not in keeping with the area", or "Nothing has to be done, otherwise it wouldn't be the Doolin we got to know." The town's infrastructural build-up, then, is not lost on tourists' short-term impressions of the area.

To a certain extent, it was the growth of tourism itself that concretised the usage of the name "Doolin". Two factors were involved. First, because of tourism, Doolin increased its built environment significantly. So on the one hand, the village that one sees today, in terms of its architecture, is a direct result of tourism. Secondly, while some travel guides like *The Lonely Planet* mention the fact that alternative names are also used to talk about the place (Callan *et al* 2002:447), "Doolin" is ubiquitously used as an official label to describe, advertise and discuss the village, when in fact, this was not always the name used in the past.

Travel guides often advertise the landscape around Doolin and discuss various practical matters for the tourist such as the nature of accommodation, the restaurants and attractions of the area. They also promote the fact that its pubs are "renowned for Irish music" (Callan *et al* 2002:449), or that it has "an international reputation for Irish traditional music sessions" (Kelleher 2003:381). But travel guides are also often loaded with superficially misleading or patently false information (for example, see footnote 5). For the tourist, mythological statements only lead to disappointment when they find the reality to be otherwise.

Travlou has argued that tourist guide books act as "the mediator in the interaction of the tourists with the destination place. The tourist, the sight and the guidebook—as part of the group of markers—are bound in an empirical relationship, constructing the tourism experience" (2002:108). I would extend this argument one step further and posit that, over time, this triumvirate of 'markers' also have the power to assist in the construction of the place itself. Travel guides also mark out a 'narrative' of the development of a tourist locale. Just 25 years ago, in the first reference I was able to find that discussed Doolin

(and in this case, O'Connor's Pub specifically), one author advised, "[d]on't forget, though, this is a social spot for the locals, not a tourist hangout" (Bryant 1979[1977]:171-172). Today, the opposite assessment is proffered in one case. For example, according to the 2003 Frommer's guide, "Gus O'Connor's has the farthest-reaching reputation, but it pays the price by being jammed with tourists. On many nights, you couldn't find a local inside there if your life depended on it" (Kelleher 2003:381). The commonality of travel writers' underlying abhorrence of tourist crowds in passages like this is ironic as well.

Conceptually, this 'creation of the place' of Doolin feeds into Robertson's argument that "globalisation involves the 'invention' of localities in opening up the possibilities of mobilising and manipulating global processes for local purposes" (Casey 2003:44). Tourism has 'put Doolin on the map', but this process has been a collaboration between local residents and the larger tourism 'industry'. The benefits of creating a 'village that wasn't there' are mutually important. Authors writing in the genre of the guidebook require a name and a concise description of a place in order to present pragmatic information for the tourist. Locals also understand the necessity of marketing a consistent representation of Doolin for the same purposes in order to 'market' it as a holiday destination. The results of this collaborative effort are concretising.

## V.

### Conclusions

The economic prosperity of the Celtic Tiger brought wealth to Ireland, but it also had complicating consequences. The maldistribution of wealth means that a new bourgeois class has emerged, one that is, according to one Irish author, "better at imitating than inventing and... have now become practically indistinguishable from their European and global counterparts" (Mac Laughlin 1997:4). The Celtic Tiger has also propelled Ireland further into a global arena, both economically and culturally. An underlying argument in this thesis is that Ireland has, to a certain extent, always been 'globalised'. The Celtic Tiger accelerated this process dramatically. Globalisation flows through many different channels, among them, money and people. Larger, historic economic policies in Ireland slowly shifted the focus away from protectionism towards globalisation, resulting in the expansive growth of the economy in the 1990s. Money flowed into the country through corporate investments, but the cost has been a policy to allow much of that money to flow back out. To some extent, while this has caused a great deal infrastructural development, it also created an illusion of wealth. People, as holidaymakers, also brought money into the country, and the

Irish quickly capitalised on tourism. The tourists themselves, carrying the baggage of their own cultural exoticism, have helped globalise Ireland in a different way.

The local expression of these dramatic changes are unique in their own way, but they also reflect the larger patterns throughout Ireland. I have outlined the multifarious ways in which the local tourist 'industry' has developed since the early 1980s, and how the development of tourism has even consolidated an understanding of the 'place' of Doolin. Before, one might have said that there was no 'there' there, but now, the notion of Doolin as a distinct place is a clear one, at least in the minds of tourists and those working in the tourist industry. This concretisation of the notion of the village, though, is a dynamic process, and one that is ongoing. Externally, the larger tourist industry (through the medium of travel guides, advertisements and the like) has helped conceive a single 'village' out of a scattering of buildings across a farming landscape with a diversity of names. In the past, the idea of 'Doolin' was often confused with the 'sub-villages' in the parish. Now, the name 'Doolin', and I would argue the *notion* of 'Doolin', has completely overtaken all alternate nomenclature and conceptions.

These processes don't simply happen on their own. People make them happen. In the first three chapters of this thesis, I have delineated some of the more influential global changes that have impacted Doolin, and how Doolin people have in turn affected the world. Like Bourdieu (1972), I contend that the difference between structure and agency is not so much a dichotomy as an interrelationship between two aspects of a whole system. Individuals like Gus and Dolly O'Connor, the Russell and Kilhourey brothers made their mark on the global Irish music scene by being welcoming hosts to a Revival. The economic buoyancy of the 1960s, the counter-cultural casting off of earlier hegemonies and the resurgent interest in traditional Irish music helped amplify the affect of their quiet agency to the world. Later, through the action of other individuals, Doolin became an institution on the Irish tourist trail, and to some extent, it was individual agency that even concretised the very 'notion' of Doolin as a place. Again, the ability of individuals to create these more recent changes was underwritten by a second, more intense wave of economic buoyancy. So individual actions can and do affect the structure, but the scope of their impacts are relative to the level of economic buoyancy in underlying structure.

In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at the mass tourists who come to Doolin today. In chapter 6, we will look at some of the tourists who came to stay. And in chapter 7, we will begin to explore how the commercial success of the Celtic Tiger and the emergent mass tourism industry has come to effect the traditional Irish music scene in the village.

## Chapter Five—Tourism and Tourists

[Doolin is] much more built up than when I visited in 1982...  
[I'm] almost sad to see the development in the area from the  
quaint village it was. [But] can one rightfully stop progress  
when it benefits the locals?

—South African tourist

### I.

#### **Introduction**

In chapter four, I detailed how recent growth in the Irish economy affected Doolin. Tourism has been a big part of that growth, and communities like Doolin literally and figuratively capitalised on the lucrative potential of tourism. The build-up of a tourist infrastructure in the village has laid the groundwork for 'mass tourism', and in this chapter, I will analyse who these mass tourists are and what they expect from Doolin. I also point out the fact that the tourist 'site' is not fixed; rather, it is a 'roving' field that passes through physical space. I will also take a look at some of the different kinds of tourists that come to Doolin in some detail. First, coach tourists are an important source of income for some stakeholders in the local tourist industry, and many coaches pass through the village in the summertime. Secondly, the important seasonal nature of tourism is recognised here. The two most prominent festivals that occur in the local calendar are discussed, namely, the Micho Russell Festival and the Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking festival. Finally, I will detail how some tourists get more involved with the community than 'mass' tourists. In particular, I will take a closer look at 'working tourists', 'travellers', and 'visitors'.

### II.

#### **Mass Tourism and Mass Tourists**

The build up of the tourist infrastructure—and by that I mean the access to Doolin, the accommodation build-up, and the availability for consumption of food in restaurants and souvenirs in shops—has led to a situation whereby Doolin now caters more to a general tourist market with diverse motivations (i.e., 'mass tourists') than the specialised 'music tourists' that characterised the Revival period. Urry argues that 'mass tourism' resulted from a "democratisation of travel" (2002:16) whereby holidaymakers come from all walks of life and with

multifarious motivations, rather than the “socially selective” travel that had preceded it (*ibid.*). Urry specifically discusses elite seaside resorts and upper class ‘social selection’, but we can easily invert the class structure to fit Doolin’s Revival period. Subsequently, it’s difficult to say, and maybe pointless to dwell on, whether or not mass tourism came first or whether the build up of the tourist infrastructure led to mass tourism. The change was not immediate, and most likely, there was a mutually expanding relationship between the two.

In a survey of tourists that I conducted in conjunction with the Doolin Tourism Co-operative over a two-month period during the summer of 2003, we gathered basic data about Doolin’s tourist population: what country they originated from, why they chose Ireland as a destination, what things they wanted to experience in Ireland, what attracted them to Doolin, how they travelled, and what type of accommodation they stayed in among other things<sup>1</sup>.

The nationality of Doolin’s tourists is consistent with the make-up of tourists for the region generally. According to a Shannon Development document published in April of 2003, 44% of tourists landing in Shannon Airport were North Americans (“National Tourism Policy Review” 2003:3)<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, just under 48% of Doolin’s visitors in 2003 were from North America (Americans and Canadians).

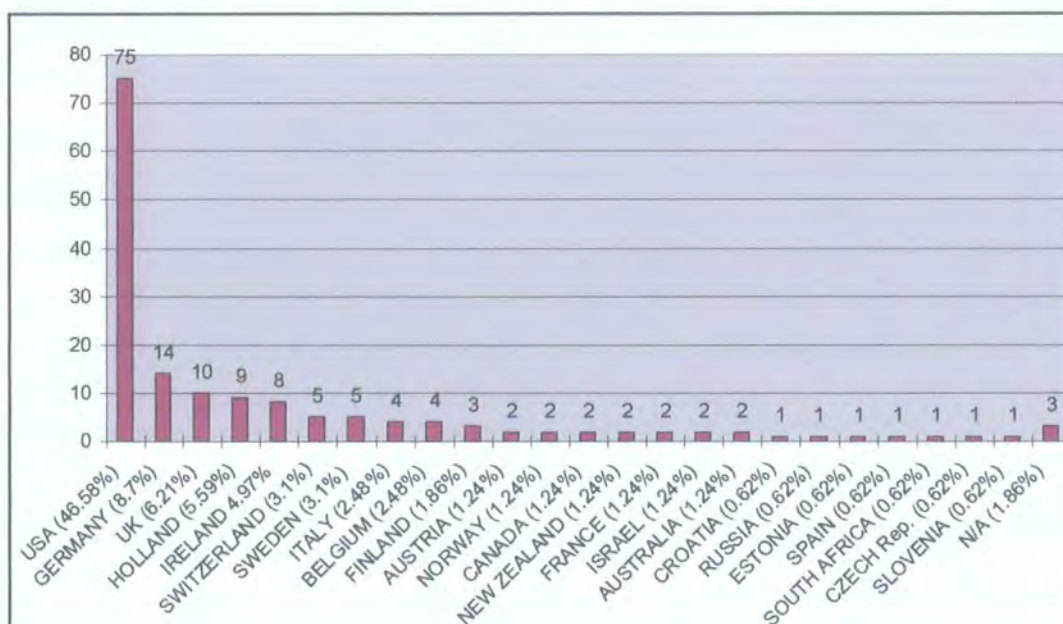


Figure 5.1: Tourist origins

Discourses of tourist types are an integral part of the academic literature on tourists, but I agree with Chambers, who argues that there is no universally

<sup>1</sup> For a full report on the character of Doolin’s tourist population over the summer of 2003, see Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> These numbers were taken from the 1.9 million people who arrived in Ireland via Shannon Airport in 2002

useful taxonomy of tourist types. The “creation of tourist types varies in relation to what features of tourism are deemed to be significant for any particular analysis” (Chambers 2000:22). Smith has two taxonomies. The first divides tourists up into *ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational* tourists (1989[1977]:4-5). The second runs along a spectrum based on how well or how poorly tourists integrate with the local population: *explorers, elites, offbeat* and *unusual tourists* integrate better than *incipient mass, mass* and *charter* tourists (1989[1977]:12). Urry’s oft cited classifications on the other hand include categories based on how various types of tourists ‘gaze’ upon the touristed destination. The ‘romantic tourist’ travels to beautiful landscapes (2002), the ‘spectatorial tourist’ enjoys a ‘collective gaze’ amongst crowds (*ibid.*:43-44). The ‘reverential gaze’ comes from tourists who travel to religious sites (*ibid.*:150), the ‘anthropological gaze’ from those who interpret their destinations culturally and historically (*ibid.*:151), and the ‘environmental gaze’ from those who travel with a conscious sensitivity to the environmental impact of their holiday (*ibid.*). Finally, the ‘mediatised gaze’ is exhibited by tourists who travel to sites made famous by television, movies and the like (*ibid.*).

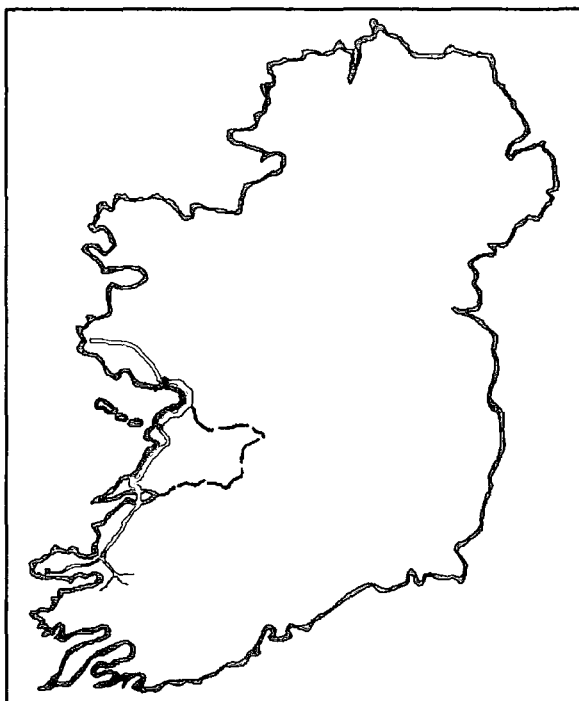
As Chambers points out though, these kinds of typologies originate from a social scientific perspective rather than the subjects under study. I would also argue that taxonomies like Urry’s are inherently limited by focusing on the visual aspects of holidaymaking. In Doolin, the tourist experience is visual, but also culinary, aural, olfactory, etc. Conversely, Chambers argues that “[r]elatively little attention has been paid to the *emic* categorizations that are made by the members of the communities that receive



**Figure 5.2:** Tourists ‘gazing’ at local heritage sites

tourists” (2002:22). Also, the *etic* viewpoint often fails to consider the returning ‘gaze’ thrown back onto the tourists by the locals (Tucker 1997:120). Besides Tucker’s analysis of a Turkish village, a few exceptions to these general critiques exist. Kohn’s work in the Scottish Inner Hebrides is one (1997:16-17). She found that locals “carefully distinguished” between ‘day-trippers’, ‘yachties’, ‘tourists’, and ‘summer-swallows’ (*ibid.*). The extensive work done by Waldren in Mallorca (1996) is another example.

When I asked permanent residents in Doolin how they would describe various 'types' of people, it was clear that the most important categories have to do with permanent residents (see chapter 6). When it came to tourists, the *emic* response consistently began with a national-signifier. Everyone else is categorised as a 'tourist' or a 'visitor' and further qualified by other identifiers when necessary as in "that rich American with the southern accent who's dressed in golfing gear". Not surprisingly, there were no sub-categories of tourists that resemble Smith's or Urry's taxonomies, (or categories that paralleled *emic* sub-categories of visitors in other contexts).



**Figure 5.3:** Major tourist routes

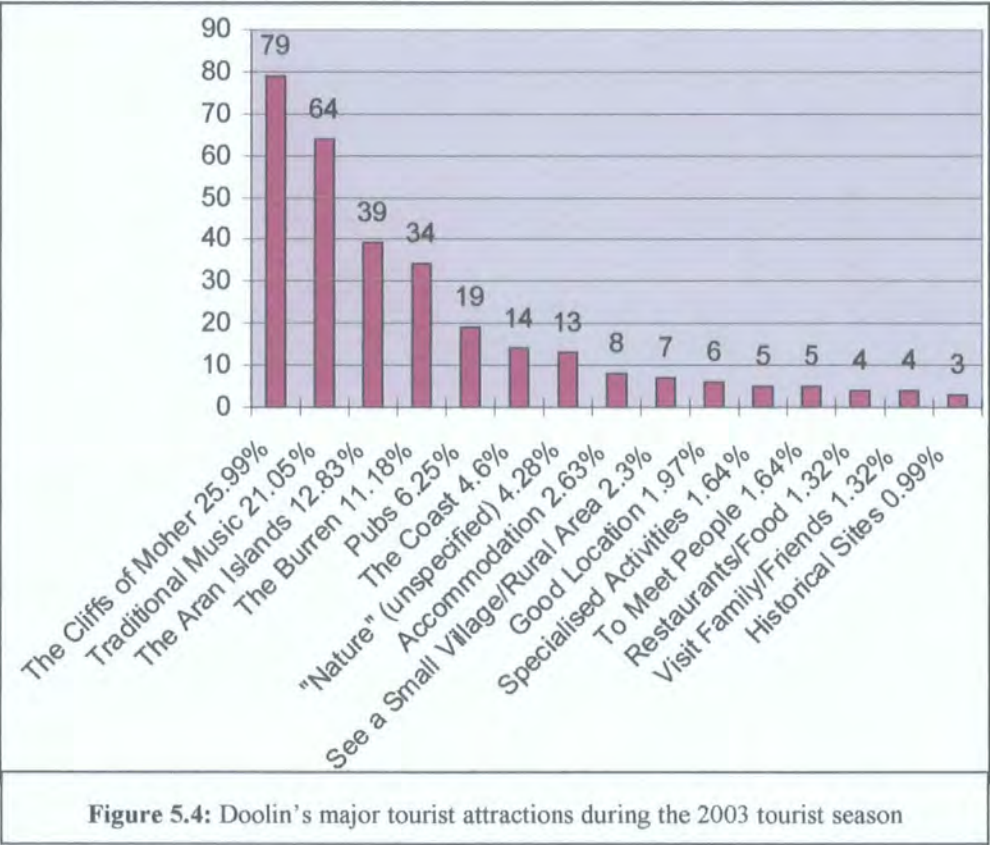
It was always difficult for me not to come up with stereotypical categories of tourists, and indeed, this is the primary reason why I decided to utilise quantitative methods to understand this changing, mobile population. We must recognize that the 'tourist-site' is not fixed; rather, it is on the move (cf. Oliver 2001). Tourists pass through physical spaces like Doolin, and each group may travel a different route. So, seen 'from below', in other words from the perspective of a physical site fixed in space, the tourist population is constantly shifting and its make-up

is constantly changing. One week may be dominated by Americans. The next, Continental Europeans may make up most of the tourist crowd. Authoritative answers to even simple questions like, "Who are these tourists?" then become difficult to come by. However, despite the fluid and dynamic nature of this population, certain patterns of behaviour emerge. Clearly, Americans make up a bulk of the tourist population, for example. The survey also reveals a strong pattern that supports anecdotal evidence about common tourist routes in the west of Ireland. This map illustrates those patterns. Predominantly, tourists travel along the coastal counties in the west, and Doolin becomes one stop on this coastal journey. On this map, I have highlighted the most common routes in and out of Doolin along the coast. The route in and out of county Galway (and in particular, the city of Galway), highlighted in blue, is the most frequently travelled. One can also reach Clifden in Galway county within a single day's



drive. Clifden is a popular tourist destination, and this route is highlighted in red. Travelling south into county Kerry is the next most common route that tourists travel, which is shown here in green.

Often, tourists' comments about why they go to places like Doolin are mixed and very general. A common example comes from a middle-aged Swedish tourist who said she came "mainly [for] the trad. music and beautiful scenery, and also it's convenient for going to Galway and Limerick". A young New Zealander said that she came on the recommendation of a friend "to see the Cliffs of Moher and Doolin and the Burren." Others have little choice in the matter as is revealed by a young New Yorker on a coach tour who simply said "It was one of the places on the tour." In my year in the village, I often heard tourists even say that they had no idea why they were there. They were simply told to go. This extremely generalised (or sometimes even confused) basis for visiting a destination is a key characteristic of mass tourism. It is a far-cry from the intentional, pilgrimage-like inconvenience of the tourism that characterised the Revival period.



Doolin is a very conveniently located destination, situated right next to three famous Irish landscapes, and only a few hours' drive from Shannon airport. Plus, the village itself is a good spot to experience pub life, which for many tourists includes Irish music. Many of Doolin's tourists talk about how they had landed at Shannon Airport that day and came straight to Doolin to start their



holiday, or conversely, were finishing their holiday there and leaving via Shannon the next day. So, who is ‘telling’ tourists to go to Doolin?

According to the 2003 survey, there were two significant answers. Unsurprisingly, 38.6% of the 159 respondents had read about it in a tourist guidebook. Interestingly though, ‘word-of-mouth’ accounted for 42.11% of respondents’ answers. Of those who said they’d heard



**Figure 5.5:** The Cliffs from Doolin

about Doolin from someone else, well over half (59%) said they were told about this little village in their home country which reveals the international reputation of the place. It also means that, for those who are involved in the local tourist economy and who are naturally worried about the future health of the local tourist industry, tourists’ opinions and suggestions must be taken very seriously.



**Figure 5.6:** The session becomes a souvenir

Irish music is the second most important draw to Doolin after the landscape. This isn’t surprising. Quinn notes that even as far back as 1993, 69% of visitors surveyed by Bord Failte indicated that “traditional Irish folk music was either ‘a very important’ or a ‘fairly important’ factor in considering Ireland as a holiday destination (1996:386). Since the bulk of this thesis details the historical development of this appeal for tourists, and the impact that it has had on that

music, I won’t dwell on this factor in this chapter. The appeal of the region’s landscape cannot be underestimated though. Five out of seven of the top attractions, according to the survey, were natural environments.

Tourists often speak very laudably about Doolin. This American’s comments are representative:

I have to say that Doolin was exactly what I expected, which surprised me. It really was tiny. It really did have only three pubs. The music really was extraordinary.

This German tourist didn't seem to know what to expect, and although his first impression was that it was a bit depressing, Doolin 'grew on him':

I was a little disappointed [with Doolin] at first. It made the impression of being 'forgotten', and our landlady and the farmhouse itself seemed a little bit 'sad'. But Doolin developed some charm after a while mainly through the nice experience in the pub... I didn't expect music for I didn't know before that it is famous for it. I came for the Cliffs, but was very pleased when the music session started. Then I found it quite traditional.

Others were not without a critical voice. Many tourists in the survey were concerned that Doolin was becoming too touristed and too developed. When the survey asked "How might Doolin be improved?", the overwhelming response was to leave it alone or to stop development. This question elicited a great many hand-written comments as well, some of which are worth reproducing here. An American from Kentucky wrote, "Please don't change Doolin. It is so lovely." A slightly more insistent example of this assessment came from an American from Rhode Island who wrote, "Keep it the way it is! Limit growth!" A Scottish visitor with friends in the area had more to say: "No more buildings!!—esp. big houses/B&Bs which are not in keeping with the area. Much of Ireland [is] being spoilt by poor planning which has a negative impact on the surroundings for local people and visitors. Careful Future planning [is] needed!" Another American tourist was more generally worried about the over-development of the local tourist industry having come from one himself. He wrote, "I live in a tourist town... in northern California, 900 pop[ulation, but] on a Saturday in the summer, 3000... In 1988, [it] was a wonderful town. With tourism came development and now [it's] not so nice. Don't let Doolin become Disneyland... Don't become California with lots of houses. Also no tacky leprechaun tourist shops. Keep it real. Keep it local." These kinds of statements indicate that many tourists want Doolin to exist for its own sake. One tourist put it succinctly this way: "More Irish, less tourists". The underlying implication is that a sense of 'authenticity', a sense that one is keeping the community 'local' and 'real', is derived from the production of the lifeworld for oneself and not for others' consumption or for profit. The tourist-oriented built environment and the increasingly tourist-oriented production of the music (see chapter 7) are sometimes perceived to be 'inauthentic' because they are being produced for others and for profit. Tourists are also critical about high prices, development,

and the village's modern facilities<sup>3</sup>. This is sharply contrasted with their assessment of the area's natural beauty and the friendliness of the people who live in it.

### **Coach Tours**

The data that I gathered in conjunction with the Doolin Tourism Co-operative from this survey has a significant bias towards those tourists who stayed overnight in the village because the surveys were distributed to B&Bs, hostels and campsites where customers filled them out. A smaller proportion were filled out at the area's restaurants and pubs. This means that coach tourists who pass through the village for extremely short periods (an hour or two) are barely represented. On the other hand, I had extensive, daily experience with coach tours as a member of staff at O'Connor's Pub. Since this kind of tourist makes a significant contribution to the local economy, and since they have significant impact on the daily life of the village, they are worth looking at in some detail.

When a tour group comes in, the driver (and in some cases, a separate tour-guide) will 'direct' the tourists' luncheon 'performance' (Edensor 2000) by handing out menus, telling them where they can or cannot sit, informing them of the daily specials, and telling them to order their food at the bar. For example, I recorded the following instructions given to one coach tour group as it pulled into the village:

When we get to Doolin, [We'll] bring you in and give you the menus. And the first thing you do is pick a table, and the number's on the table. So when you go up to place your order, the first thing the barman will say to you is, "The number of the table where you're sitting?" So make sure to have that in your head. As I say, [we'll] give you the menus. Now, the fish and chips here is fantastic. The fish is fresh from the Atlantic Ocean every day, so it's quite good. Fish and Chips, the best in the country. The Seafood Chowder is fantastic. Of course, the Beef Stew in Guinness is good too, and our traditional meal, which is Bacon & Cabbage. But anything you order here is really good. You can tell me when you come out if you enjoyed it. And anytime I ask them when they come out, they really enjoy their food in Gussie O'Connor's. You never hear a complaint.

Having delineated the rules to the tourists, the driver sits down to a complementary meal and a chat with the bar-staff. If they have a long-standing relationship with the pub, they always sit at the bar. Only rarely did I witness a coach driver sit at one of the tables away from the bar, and when it did occur, it

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<sup>3</sup> The assessment of the village's "modern facilities" is not necessarily clear-cut because some respondents wrote in the margins comments like, "but that's a good thing!" after giving it a low rating. In other words, these tourists want to get away from modernity.



was because the stop was a very irregular occurrence for the driver, or even a 'one-off'. The topics for discussion between the drivers and the staff are often the weather, driving conditions, the nature and make-up of the day's tour-group ("A lot of Americans today"), events or news from Doolin, and general news headlines. As casual as they sound, these chats can be very important because the health of the coach tour business can be a kind of anecdotal barometer of the regional tourism industry in general. The number of tourists per tour per day is already known from the morning phone call, but the coach drivers can bring news from the larger tourism industry about the increase or decrease of tourist numbers elsewhere. If drivers originating in major tourist hubs such as Galway or Dublin complain of dwindling tourist numbers, it can indicate low tourist numbers for Doolin in the short-term future.



Figure 5.7: coach tour bus

Meanwhile, as the driver has a meal and a chat, the tourists are left to their own devices. Generally, they are hungry and order a meal and a drink. But they have at least an hour to spend in Doolin, so depending on the instructions of their guides and partially upon the weather, they often finish their meal and then

take a quick walk around Fisherstreet to snap a few pictures and to stop into one of the shops along the street. An important picture to take, it seems, is of the pub itself. Tourists like to document where they ate for later remembrances. Their tour guides will also have told them about the fame of the pub on the trip into Doolin—about its place in the history of Irish music—and so, not only do they get a dining experience, but they get a socio-historic experience at the same time. It becomes its own kind of 'site'. Fisherstreet and the Cliffs of Moher are also popular photographable subjects.



Figure 5.8: Capturing the pub on video

In Edensor's terms, the packaged coach tours that pass through for lunch are *partially* 'enclavic tourist spaces' in the sense that there is a "continual maintenance of a clear boundary which demarcates which activities may occur" (2000:328). The space is



“organized to provide a self-contained environment where tourists are encouraged to spend as much money as possible. Thus their activities and movements are arranged to facilitate maximum expenditure by circulating them between enclavic attractions and by setting up institutional arrangements where services dovetail with each other” (*ibid.*:329). Coach tourists are led directly into the pub for their lunch, and their time limitations only allow them to wander around the Fisherstreet part of the village and into the shops there. In this way, coach tourists are kept in the semi-enclavic space of Fisherstreet where they are encouraged to spend money in the pub and in the shops.

To extend this metaphor of the ‘staged’ spaces, the built environment of Fisherstreet creates a kind of natural ‘front stage’ area along its main street. Fisherstreet at one point turns at a ninety degree angle and ascends a slight incline behind the main part of the street, but this section of road is not paved. In fact, it is a very rough gravel track, and appears rather uninviting to most tourists. It forms a partially ‘back stage’ area, although a number of B&Bs operate there. Locals have told me that they would like to keep it unpaved on purpose in order to maintain this ‘backstage’ effect. Jamesie lives there and he told me, “If they pave it, everyone would be coming up here.”

The coach tour experience is only partially ‘enclavic’ however because there is no barring of “locals not employed in the enclave” (*ibid.*) as is typical of purely ‘enclavic’ spaces (*ibid.*). Permanent residents of Doolin are often found in the pub or along the street (and sometimes become photographable subjects themselves). While the coach tourists often perform what Edensor calls a ‘disciplined ritual’

(*ibid.*:334), for the most part keeping to themselves and ‘gazing’ at their surroundings through the camera lens, opportunities for more ‘improvised performances’ (*ibid.*:335), albeit short ones, are available to the more outgoing tourists who wish to interact with locals.



**Figure 5.9:** Fisherstreet’s ‘front stage’



For many of these coach tourists, the group experience seems to supplant the individual experience. Coach tourists often travel in smaller familial and friendship sub-groups, travelling and gazing together. Groups experience the locale as a group. Loners on coach tours always seem to stand out. In other words, the other members of the group one travels with—especially in the context of these packaged tours—partially prevent (or protect) an individual from experiencing the locale, its people and its places, on their own. So, what one



**Figure 5.10:** Fisherstreet's 'backstage'



**Figure 5.11:** Fisherstreet's 'backstage'

ends up experiencing is the group itself and how the group interacts with the locale. The individual within the group *sees* the locale, but they *experience* the group. I want to be careful not to overplay this point though because as Oliver (2001) has shown, coach tourists do not travel through places in a impermeable 'social bubble' (*ibid.*:237).

### **Seasonality: A Story of Two Villages**

As I have mentioned before, seasonality is an underlying influence on all aspects of village life. It is worth stressing this point again because, as one anthropologist said to me after I described the village in a conference paper, "It sounds like a story of two villages" (Rapport 2004, personal communication). His assessment isn't far off. Nationally, the seasonal pattern of tourism has been identified as a "key issue" (Deegan and Dineen 1997:247). Locally, the first major influx of tourists arrive a few weeks after St. Bridget's Day (February 1<sup>st</sup>), the beginning of the farming calendar. This is when the Micho Russell Festival occurs (see below), and despite the fact that it is one solitary weekend at the tail end of the quiet winter months, it reminds the village of what's to come. It gets quiet again after this festival, but slowly, week by week, the crowds thicken, the



coach tours have more occupants, and a few more independent tourists arrive in Doolin by car or bus. For me, the end of winter in 2003 was marked by the last session played in the 'front room' of O'Connor's Pub in late March with the coal-fire still blazing away. The crowds had steadily become so large over the weeks that by then it was difficult to squeeze into the room. It was still a lovely session, and I recall the night was completed when Seamus sang his favourite song, *Eileen MacMahon* to a perfect silence. After that, all of the sessions were held in the larger 'main bar' and were amplified.



**Figure 5.12:** A bold tourist

The week of Easter usually marks the beginnings of the tourist season in most peoples' minds. Afterwards, the increasing trickle of tourists becomes steadily stronger until, by June, it's a flood. The 'tourist season' doesn't really start to slack off until the end of September. During the 'high season' as it is sometimes called, there is no hope of finding a bed to sleep on in Killilagh parish unless you've booked in advance. The summer months are hectic, especially between mid-June and mid-August. Frantic work defines the existence of Doolin's residents who work in the tourist economy<sup>4</sup>. Summer is the time for work—for farming, for fishing, for serving tourists food and drink, and for changing

their beds. Tourists are everywhere—at the sea, in the pubs, in the restaurants, and along the roads. On sunny afternoons, so many camera-toting tourists are on the hoof that Fisherstreet and Roadford can resemble a carnival or a street façade at Disneyland. At the height of the summer season, it becomes difficult to remember how quiet the winters are (and vice versa).

The tourist season changes in September when the Matchmaking Festival starts up in the neighbouring town of Lisdoonvarna (see below). Just when tourism begins to die down in the rest of the country, the Matchmaking Festival extends the tourist season in northwest Clare for another month. During October, the tourist flood slowly drains away to a trickle again. By November, things get so quiet that B&Bs start shutting down completely for the winter, whole sections of the pubs are closed off (almost 2/3rds of O'Connor's Pub, for example, is closed off for the winter), and restaurants close. During the winter of 2002 and 2003, only four of the villages' B&Bs were taking customers, and occasionally even these wouldn't have more than one or two rooms filled each

<sup>4</sup> Farmers' work in the summer is somewhat frantic as well, and again, while the economy has shifted away from farming and fishing towards tourism, this older seasonal pattern remains.



night. Two of the three pubs, McGann's and McDermott's, start to open only at 6:00 p.m., and occasionally during the winter, there are so few customers that they shut well before closing time.



**Figure 5.13:** Rough winter seas at the Cliffs

The wintertime in the auld days was a time of rest, quiet visits during the day, the fallowing of fields, and long nights in warm company next to the fire. That pattern remains today despite the fact that the economy has shifted. In the winter, especially after McGann's and McDermott's have started their winter opening times at 6:00 p.m., O'Connor's is literally the

only public space to socialise during the day. It becomes a place to sit and drink coffee and tea with friends and neighbours. Crosswords are never left unfinished. The fishermen and the members of the local Coast Guard unit, 'Doolin Rescue', practice tying complicated knots.

Weekends in the pubs are 'busy', but this 'busy-ness' is absolutely different than the busy-ness of summer. A weekend night pulls in locals in the winter, into intimate company, into complicated rounds of drink<sup>5</sup>, and into conversation. It is the busy-ness amongst consociates (Schutz 1970:170), people who share one another's biographies, and for that reason, it is not only quantitatively different from the busy-ness of the summertime, but qualitatively



**Figure 5.14:** Quiet winter session

different. Music is played Fridays through Mondays in one pub, and only on Fridays and Saturdays in the other two. The days and nights during the week can be oppressively quiet. In the very heart of the winter, one pub stops hosting music sessions altogether for about two months.

A few weeknights are highlighted in the wintertime by games and events held in the pubs as well. Pub quizzes are organised randomly in Doolin, but some neighbouring communities host them weekly. The card game called '45s' or sometimes just 'the Old Game', is played weekly in two of the three pubs on different nights<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Cassidy (1995) for a detailed discussion of drinking patterns and the rounds-system in Ireland.

<sup>6</sup> The games' rules are simple enough (despite the fact that I could never learn them myself), but the excitement comes from the complicated strategising and the wide-spread, publicly acknowledged



Christmas is a big event in the calendrical cycle. It is a time when emigrated family members return and sub-rituals are held. Christmas feasts are consumed, and a party atmosphere once again consumes the night-life for a few weeks. Village residents dress as Mummers, described in another Irish context by Glassie (1995[1982]:141-142), and visit the homes in the parish. The Mummers put on a short play in the houses they visit, and the entertained host gives them money which goes to a 'good cause'. 'Little Christmas' occurs on the twelfth day of Christmas, and is a quieter affair.

The two months following Christmas are the quietest in the year. Money, energy and excitement finally runs out after the Christmas holidays. Work slackens to a snails'-pace, and employment in the service industry nearly shuts down. At this point in the year, I was relegated to one shift per week at the pub, and this was for the most part a symbolic gesture on my employer's part. These can be oppressively quiet months where entertainments and distractions must be created and searched out. Soon enough however, the season starts all over again in February when the Micho Russell Festival is held.

### III.

#### **Festival Tourists**

Some tourists come to the area with very specific motivations. Obviously, there are those who come for particular activities such as scuba-diving, hiking, or potholing. They may have little other interest in the area or the people who live there. But I want to address other tourists here, those that come for two particular events that affect Doolin's tourist industry annually. The first is the Micho Russell Festival held in Doolin every February. The second is Lisdoonvarna's Matchmaking Festival. Anthropologists may have a bad habit of being too 'event' oriented and thereby neglecting the 'everyday', but festivals have the habit of bringing latent issues to the fore. Moreover, they are important marks on the calendar.

#### **The Micho Russell Festival**

The Micho Russell Memorial Weekend, sometimes called 'the Micho Russell' or simply 'the Weekend', is held annually in Doolin over the weekend at the end of February closest to the anniversary of Micho Russell's death. This is billed as a traditional Irish music festival, attracting musicians from all over the world.

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cheating that occurs by means of pre-arranged hand-signals and facial cues given to the other members of one's team. This is usually taken in stride as 'all part o the fun', although I was witness to one attempted fist-fight (which never really got off the ground) that erupted over an accusation of more serious cheating. Despite the scuffle, the opponents settled back down to finish the game after only a few minutes.

Traditional Irish music festivals are common throughout Ireland, but most occur during the summertime. The Doolin festival occurs early in the calendar and is, as far as I'm aware, the first one of the year. Festivals are a relatively new phenomenon. As Quinn noted some years ago, "there has been a proliferation in the number of festivals and summer schools springing up around the country in recent years," which, she contends, "can arguably be linked to the widely held perception that festivals attract visitors and in doing so, generate income for the host economy" (1996:387-388).

There is a common pattern of events in these music festivals, and Doolin's version follows a familiar format. There are scheduled events in the local community centre, while spontaneous sessions occur all weekend in the village's pubs. The community centre events usually consist of hired musicians and ceili bands who perform on a stage for a paying audience of listeners or dancers. In 2003, the ninth annual festival, many of the local musicians and 'bands' were asked to perform in these formally scheduled events, and the local children put on a fantastic variety show of their own, a combination of dramatics, music and dancing<sup>7</sup>.

The Kilfenora Ceili Band was the 'headline' act. An advertisement for the festival, posted on "IR-TRAD", the online traditional Irish music chat-group, historicizes the meeting of this celebrated ceili band, founded in the auld days, with the pub session scene that emerged during the Revival, in modern-day Doolin :

When the Russells and the Killourheys were much sought after musicians for the house dances around Doolin and Moher back in the 1930s and 40s, Kilfenora [Ceili Band] were gearing up in the newly built dance halls sweeping the country. By the late 1950s the band had become a household name. While traditional music entertainment diverged in the 1960s into the pub and the rise in popularity of places like Doolin, the band played on. On this occasion seeing the Kilfenora [Ceili Band] in Doolin is like witnessing the meeting of the waters (Doorty 2003).

A memorial Mass to honour Micho Russell is held every year in the local church as a part of the festival, and a ritual wreath-laying is held over his gravestone. In 2003, at the Mass and at the grave, poems were read, *sean-nós* songs were sung, traditional music was played, and at the end of the Mass, an older local man danced down the aisle to much applause. It was as much a celebration of local traditions as it was a memorial service for one of the community's deceased 'stars'. Since many traditional Irish music festivals

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<sup>7</sup> The children were students of a northwest Clare arts program called the *Spraoi Arts School*.

honour the memory of some local musician, memorial services like this are common.

Meanwhile, in the pubs, there are massive sessions all weekend. Visiting musicians confidently start up sessions in every corner of the pubs and are joined by strangers bound by the familiarity of the music. They are what Schutz would call 'contemporaries' (1970:218). Communication is musical more than it is verbal. Local musicians play along with visitors and relationships are founded, especially if visiting musicians return year after year. Strangers meet one year as contemporaries and meet again the following year as consociates (*ibid.*:170). Over time, these relationships, which may never occur outside of festivals and might not even make use of spoken language, can become stronger, deeper and more intimate.

Throughout the day, people come and go. If a session slackens and the ephemerally existential craic fades, musicians might get up and go to one of the other pubs to see if there's 'any craic.' As a result, the sessions blossom, grow, shift, and evolve all day and into the night. The listening crowds, local non-



Figure 5.15: A big session during the Micho Russell Festival

musicians, blow-ins and visiting connoisseurs, follow the craic and contribute to it. Carson describes the 'festival scene' during a *Fleadh*, but it could be Doolin:

As the town is saturated, movement becomes difficult. It is not unknown for a rake of musicians to play, drink, eat, talk and sleep in the same establishment for four days; and knowing when to stay put requires some art or wisdom. You have to know how to make the best of what there is, and settle for it; and the supposition of a better time elsewhere is mere illusion (1996:139).

Pints cross the bar at phenomenal speed and it is often difficult to move in the pubs. The heat, even in February, can be unbearable. I remember writing in my fieldnotes that, while there were plenty of mediocre, flat sessions, I also witnessed more 'good' sessions in one weekend than I'd seen in the previous month. The energy that visiting musicians bring to these events can propel the music on to uncommon heights.

Visiting musicians and traditional music connoisseurs from all over the world but especially the British Isles and America plan their holidays (necessarily

months in advance because the accommodation runs out quickly) in order to spend this weekend in Doolin. These festivals are a chance for musicians to return to Doolin after long absences to reacquaint themselves with old musician friends. In the middle of one session that I attended, musicians who had played in Doolin during the Revival arrived after many years' absence. At the end of a set, they were greeted warmly by local musicians, a short period of catching-up occurred, cigarettes were lit, rounds were bought, and then the tunes started up again with a new vigour. The music during these festivals is imbued with an energy brought on by the establishment of new acquaintances and the renewal of old ones. There is a perpetual challenge to see what the musician sitting next to you can do, what your old friend has learned in the intervening cleavages of time since you've last 'sat in' with them.

The scheduled concerts in the Community Centre were well-attended by visitors as well as permanent residents of the area. At the first concert of the weekend in 2003, the emcee's commentary revealed a subtext to the festival having to do with 'visitation' and indeed tourism, albeit of a specialised nature. He asked the audience, "How many visitors do we have here tonight?" About one-half to two-thirds of the audience raised their hands. "And how many locals do we have?" About one-third of the audience raised their hands and a loud cheer went up. The emcee then went on to give a short historical description of Doolin, its extensive archaeological sites, its unique and beautiful geology, and its place in the Revival of traditional Irish music. This was pointedly done for the benefit of the visitors, and he encouraged them to take a walk around the beautiful countryside sometime over the weekend to take in some of the area's non-musical features. Then, after the first act, to 'fill the space', the emcee talked about all of the musicians who come to Ireland to learn Irish music and how great that is. He was of course preaching to the choir to some extent. Festivals actively attract all visitors, whether they are Irish or international. This was a crowd that, as he had just established, consisted of a large proportion of visitors, many presumably from other countries. And it was obviously a crowd that was keen on Irish music. He continued his educational commentary and discussed Micho Russell himself. He related a few amusing anecdotes that highlighted the man's personality.

The whole first night of concert 'acts', and the commentary in between, had two purposes: a celebration of local traditions (and their continuation) for the local people, and as an educational event for the visitors. An elderly local man got up and sang a song about "The Russells of Doonagore" which celebrated both of the deceased Russell Brothers, Micho and Packie. Another man sang one of Micho Russell's favourite songs named after its subject, John Phillip Holland, a

Clareman who invented the submarine. The drama section of the children's act celebrated the old traditional lifestyle of the region, and a number of children recited a poem about Micho Russell. Then Susan O'Connor, Micho's first student, and her daughter, Kate, sang two songs to thunderous applause. These performances were an affirmation of continuity, a proclamation that a new generation would carry the music and the traditions of the community forward, that it would not die out or fade.

The festival was not just attended by visiting musicians and connoisseurs of traditional music. Some people came simply because they knew that there would be 'some craic' in the village during the festival. Others were random tourists who either wandered accidentally into Doolin during the festival or had recently heard about it while on holiday and decided to 'check it out'. Amongst this latter group, a quick survey of tourists in one pub revealed to me that there were a number of international tourists who knew absolutely nothing or relatively little about the festival before they'd arrived. By chance, they'd simply planned their holiday during the festival and booked accommodation in or near Doolin, but were well-pleased to have done so. This less intensely keen audience also presumably spend most of their time in the pub sessions due to the expense of entrance fees for the concerts in the Community Centre. Coach tours, surprisingly, did not avoid Doolin during the festival despite the fact that it was nearly impossible for these tourists to find a place to sit and have a meal in the pubs. However, it seemed that the coach tourists were excited by the energy of the place.

While festivals and spectacles are not by any means representative of 'normality', they can publicly underscore aspects of a culture which are usually expressed more subtly in daily routine. As I described above, part of the subtext of the public concert series was to highlight the health of the local music scene and the notion of continuity. On the other hand, the festival brought a number of less public tensions to the fore as well.

In particular, feelings of discord began to emerge between the festival organisers and resident musicians during the weeks prior to the festival. Significantly, the Festival Committee was made up mostly of the village's publicans. This fact alone caused some musicians and locals to suspect that the primary motivation for hosting the festival was to make money, *not* to honour the memory of one of the community's deceased 'stars'. Money-making and memorialising were seen as opposing motivations. One person put it to me this way:

I'm just disgusted with the whole lot of it.  
Ah yeah.

'Cause a lot of The Committee wouldn't even say "hello" to Micho when he was alive. He was a lovely man, and a lovely musician, and the people who were closest to him have nothing to do with The Weekend, you know? So it's a money-making thing.

Another musician was asked to join the Committee, but flatly refused, he told me, "on principle". The publicans had a much more pragmatic attitude though. They felt that the musicians who complained or refused to get involved in what the organisers saw as an opportunity to promote Doolin and its traditional music were 'prima donnas'. One Committee organiser asked me, "Who do they think they are? Bono or something?"

These tensions are not unique to the Micho Russell Festival. According to many of the people with whom I discussed these issues, tensions between profits and the production of traditional music are an undercurrent to many festivals, especially those that memorialise deceased musicians. Quinn, in a general study of festivals in Ireland, has argued that there are three motivations for a community to host a festival: by "what might be termed an artistic vision" (1996:389), by a combination of an 'artistic vision' with a secondary motivation to broaden access to the arts, and third, by financial gain (*ibid.*).

To the extent that the Micho Russell Festival was originally motivated to honour the artistry of one of Doolin's musical 'stars', it could be placed into Quinn's first categorisation. However, financial gain is certainly a motivating factor for some, which means that in actuality it would fall somewhere in between her first and third 'type' on a continuum. For example, I was told that in 2002 the festival organisers spent a bulk of their money on hiring a 'famous' outside musician with the idea that this would draw a bigger crowd. According to Quinn, this "strategy to exclude local" musicians is the very definition of a commercially motivated event (*ibid.*:392). The intense amount of local criticism over this tactic, however, caused the organisers to take corrective actions the following year. Indeed, the 2003 festival featured musicians and bands almost entirely from west Clare in their concert series. I would argue that it is this 'falling between' Quinn's categories that causes passionate and polemic opinions and emergent tension. Another festival in the area, the Matchmaking Festival, is more solidly motivated by commercial profits.

### **The Matchmaking Festival**

The Matchmaking Festival is a massive month-long festival that happens every September in Lisdoonvarna, a town only a few kilometres away from Doolin. The festival, according to advertisements, is "Europe's Biggest Singles Event" run by two men from northwest Clare ("Matchmaking Festival 2002"). One is a local

hotelier. The other is Willy Daly, the descendent of a long line of 'traditional' matchmakers (*ibid.*). Partly as a result of the way inheritance was reckoned in Ireland in the 'auld days', young men were often middle-aged before they became independent income-earners and finally able to marry. At that point in life, it could be difficult for some to find a spouse (cf. Scheper-Hughes 1979). Matchmaking was not uncommon for those whose options were limited<sup>8</sup>. Lisdoonvarna was a popular place to look for a partner in the days when it was a tourist destination for the upper echelons of Irish society who travelled there to 'take the waters' in the town's sulphuric spas. September was a popular month for travelling to fairs and festivals because the summer agricultural season was finished. The hay had been 'saved' and the livestock had been moved to winter pasturage (*ibid.*). According to the festival's literature, the

Matchmakers of old were the dealers who attended street fairs, as it was they who knew (*sic.*) the farmers who had eligible sons and daughters around the country. They invited the farmers from all over Ireland to attend the Festival the following September, and it was they who collected the generous dowries when the matches were made (*ibid.*).

This is a 're-invented tradition' if ever there was one, a tradition that is based to some extent on historical fact, but blown up into a modern festival in the last two decades. Literally, thousands upon thousands of festival-goers now descend on Lisdoonvarna every September, mostly 'for the craic', not for marriage-prospects. There are specific events that are scheduled every weekend (horse racing, the Country & Western Music Weekend, the Blind Date Weekend, etc.), and Willy Daly does meet with people to log them into his matchmaking book (*ibid.*) (which you can also do online at [www.matchmakerireland.com](http://www.matchmakerireland.com)). But the primary activities, like many festivals in Ireland, take place outside of the structured 'events'. People go to Lisdoonvarna's hotels, clubs, and pubs to dance, drink and meet people. In that sense, it does become a 'singles' event. All month, groups of men and women can be seen roaming the streets and pubs with the intention of 'hooking up' with the opposite sex. As a result of its premise, bold flirtation is the acceptable norm during the festival<sup>9</sup>.

Like the tourists who come for the Micho Russell Festival, these are specialised tourists and are given the nickname "Matchmaking tourists" or sometimes just "the September crowd". There are a variety of age-groups that

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<sup>8</sup> It is beyond the scope of the present thesis, but the dramatic changes in modern gender relations in Ireland need to be looked at in detail. The Matchmaking Festival in Lisdoonvarna of course would not be representative of modern gender relations by any means, but might prove to be a fruitful point of departure.

<sup>9</sup> A dramatic change in Ireland in recent generations has been a liberation from the sexual repression (via silence and shame) of the Church, the State, and local doctors (Inglis 1998:99).



attend the Matchmaking Festival, and a variety of venues to accommodate different tastes in music and atmosphere. Older people often like to dance 'sets' to the music performed by paid one-or-two-man 'bands'. This music is often a mixture of famous Irish ballads and popular music—rock-and-roll and country. These 'bands' often consist of, for example, an accordion player and a guitarist. One of the players usually sings, and is sometimes 'backed' by a karaoke machine. The clubs offer more modern popular music and DJs geared towards a younger crowd. So, although the premise for the festival is that one would find a life-partner, the reality is that most people come for a bit of dancing (of one variety or another), a lot of drinking, and a lot of craic<sup>10</sup>. Peter, who has catered to this crowd for decades, described the Matchmaking tourists' motivations this way:

A lot of people see it as going out into 'the sticks', you know, and "nothing goes on in Lisdoonvarna other than having fun", and that's the reason people like to come here... [to meet up with] like-minded people. So the likelihood is that if you're sitting at the [pub], you might be talking to someone who is of a similar bent as yourself.

He also pointed out that, for the most part, it is a holiday event for *domestic* tourists. There are the occasional international tourists who will come for the festival either as part of a larger holiday or even solely for the Matchmaking. But by and large, it is an Irish crowd.

Something that hasn't been spoken about much, about Lisdoonvarna and September and the Matchmaking, is that it's largely Irish holidays for Irish people. So the mix is very much different from the earlier months, from April to May to June, July and August, in that there are a lot of people from other countries [during those earlier months] and not the Irish people.

So, the 'September crowd' is primarily made up of domestic tourists who, in that respect, resemble the 'Bank Holiday crowds' that descend on Doolin every Bank Holiday Weekend for a bit of craic, and a lot of food and drinks. This is a party-goers crowd, and as a result of Doolin's place in the Revival, it has a national reputation as a place to go for the craic. Generally, locals working in the tourist industry dread these weekends, and a large percentage of the September crowd, proclaiming that they would rather not be host to them at all, despite the large profits that are made. It was a local mantra that "the Irish are the worst tourists", and the two complaints were directly linked.

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<sup>10</sup> A popular bumper-sticker in the area simply says "Lisdoonvarna for the Crack!"



This very negative *domestic* opinion about *domestic* tourists is in fact supported by an international study done on all European tourists (as cited by McDonagh 2002:5). The study, which asked tourist offices in multiple tourist 'hotspots' throughout the world to rank tourists by nationality, rated Irish tourists second-worst, only after Britons (*ibid.*). This poor Irish rating resulted from one question: "Which nationality are the worst behaved tourists by, for example, being noisy, drunk or litter louts?" (as cited in *ibid.*). Having said that, the 'September crowd' is very diverse, and these complaints were often qualified by comments about how 'lovely' the older crowd can be. Some employees even looked forward to September. So, like the specialised 'musical festival' crowd, the Matchmaking tourists have their own unique patterns of behaviour. It also difficult to argue that there is a distinct 'habitus' that directs this behaviour though. Indeed, the often outlandish behaviour exhibited during the Matchmaking festival (and on Bank Holiday Weekends) is more likely to be an abandonment of normal 'dispositions', what Turner would call 'liminoid' behaviour (1982:52).

The festival has become so large that it spills over into the neighbouring communities, especially the coastal villages of Doolin and Fanore. As the 'regular' tourist season, dominated by international tourists, begins to die down all across Ireland, this specialist tourist season fills all of the regions' B&Bs, hotels and pubs again with Irish tourists. O'Donoghue's Pub in Fanore (that village's *only* pub) offers live traditional Irish dance music for those looking for a more 'traditional' set dancing scene. Two of Doolin's pubs do nothing overtly to attract 'Matchmaking tourists', but they serve copious amounts of food and drink to them. The third Doolin pub offers 'sing-along' music which brings in a steady September crowd. The accordion player who entertains this 'overflow' Matchmaking crowd in Doolin plays a mixture of popular Irish ballads, popular rock-and-roll, and popular country western songs. (See tracks 5 and 6). He sings and plays six hours a day for the whole month. I asked him to characterise the music he plays, and he responded, "Well, it's just—all I can say is that it's sing-along music." He told me,

I'd be more of an 'entertainer' than a 'musician' if you'd like to put it—d'y'know what I mean? I can play a bit of Irish music, but I sing *more*—I'd be singin' more Irish songs now... I'm there to entertain the people... The minute I start playing, there's somebody singing or clapping their hands or banging their legs or *something*...

You're giving entertainment.

They ask you to sing 'Danny Boy', you'll sing it. 'Noreen Bawn' you'll sing it. 'My Lovely Rose of Clare', 'Paddy Reilly'. Any of the songs. That's how they're entertained.

"So you get a lot of requests then?", I asked him. He replied,

Oh yeah. *Everyday. Everyday, yeah.* I sang 'The Fields of Athenry' four times today. But I'll sing it *ten* times if I have to.

And he spends a lot of energy getting the crowd to sing along. He teases them about the quality of their singing, or he might make them sing a verse before he comes back in himself. It is music that would come in at the entertainment end of Schechner's spectrum between entertainment and efficacy (1994[1977]:120), wherein an actor who is self-consciously aware of his/her entertaining role enacts a performance for an audience of listeners who are self-consciously aware of their spectatorial role as consumers of the performance.

#### IV.

#### **'Travellers', Working Tourists and Visitors**

Not all tourists enact the behaviour of 'mass' tourists or those who come for festivals. Some arrive and immediately look for work, but do not intend to commit to staying in the community. For the most part, these tourists come to Doolin for the summertime when there is more than enough available work. This pattern of behaviour is nothing new in Ireland. Young Australians and New Zealanders for example are well-known for travelling for long periods through Europe, and often supplement their funds by working for relatively short periods in the service industry. These 'working tourists' have significantly increased in number with the unionising of Europe, especially those from continental Europe. The attraction can be solely monetary, or it can be an excuse to spend time in a beautiful location.

Leisure and work are oftentimes considered diametrically opposed to one another in the literature (cf. Coleman and Kohn, forthcoming). As Graburn famously wrote, "our conception of tourism is that it is not work" (1989:22). On the day that my wife and I arrived in Doolin, the first people we met were our new housemates, all travelling workers (and one blow-in), originally from America, Australia, Sweden, the Czech Republic and France via the Belgian Congo. I was, admittedly, quite unprepared for this introduction to social life in a small village in western Ireland, but I quickly came to realise that this was not uncommon in Doolin or indeed many towns and villages in the area.

An *Irish Independent* reporter recently wrote that all across Ireland "Irish hospitality is now being doled out in bars, hotels, and B&Bs by non-nationals" (Collins 2002:4), and he reported that according to one politician at least, this fact "could seriously damage [Ireland's] image with tourists" (as quoted by *ibid.*).

Be that as it may, employing international workers in the service industry is a fast-growing national trend. According to one reproachful editorial piece in the same paper six months later, it is partly because "Irish workers can't emulate the high standards and helpful attitudes" of foreign workers, and partly because domestic workers "seem to think that such jobs are for immigrants, students, and suckers. We don't take them seriously" (Delaney 2003:2).

Recently, Uriely has noted that, in the literature on tourism, there are only "a few references to situations in which work-related and tourist-oriented activities are combined" (2001:1). In Doolin, working-tourists most often take on unskilled or semi-skilled service jobs in the pubs, restaurants, B&Bs, hostels, and shops. Usually, these are temporary jobs, taken on for a few months during the summer. These workers are what Uriely has clumsily called 'non-institutionalised working tourists' (*ibid.*) who "tend to engage in unskilled and manual labour during their excursion... primarily as means to travel" (*ibid.*). As Uriely points out, there are a multiplicity of motivations for becoming a working-tourist, which is reflected in the multiplicity of ways that researchers have attempted to describe them (*ibid.*:4). I would suggest that 'working-tourist' is much more accurately descriptive than other terms that have been suggested in the literature. Terms like 'wanderer' (Vogt 1976), 'tramp' (Adler 1985) or 'backpacker' (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995) really describe more of a *mode* of travel rather than anything to do with the tourists' behaviour in relation to leisure or work. Working-tourists, no matter how they are described, tend to be primarily motivated by the travel experience itself, and only secondarily, out of necessity, do they spend longer periods of time in particular places in order to replenish their travel funds through work. Work becomes part of the travel experience. I found that some permanent Doolin residents called them 'working tourists', thus lumping them into a larger 'tourist' category. However, working tourists often preferred to describe *themselves* as 'travellers', thus contrasting themselves with 'mere tourists'<sup>11</sup>. This finding coincides with others who have studied tourist behaviours (Riley 1988, Tucker 1997).

An Australian who described herself as a 'traveller' named Sara explained that since she had a relatively indefinite period of which time in which to explore Ireland, she felt free to stay in one place longer if she liked it. She intended to get work to cover any living and travelling expenses. Moreover, she felt that it was important to stay longer in certain places to 'get to know the Irish better'. The relationships she could develop would then give her a more personal access to 'real life' in Ireland, not the relatively 'superficial' experience afforded to tourists. She felt that her more outgoing, adventurous personality had led her to

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<sup>11</sup> The term 'travellers' in Ireland generally describes Irish Gypsies. The terms' use here is not derived from this Irish nomenclature but a tourist one, and should not be confused.

travel in this manner. For Sara, these factors distinguished her from mass tourists who were on a tight itinerary due to a shorter holiday and an imminent leaving date.

In Doolin, this type of working travel occurs most frequently, although not entirely, in the summertime when there is readily available work in the tourist oriented service industries. Only a few working-tourists were able to keep their jobs during the winter, as employers naturally give preference to permanent residents when there's less work to go around. Many working-tourists don't intend to stay on for the winter even if they could, and many of them have obligations at the end of the summer anyway: university or 'regular' jobs 'back home'. The occasional working-tourist comes back year after year for the summer months to work, have some fun, and save a bit of money. This pattern of seasonal tourist-work is becoming more significant with the unionisation of Europe.

Another important classificatory term in Doolin, 'visitors', also falls in the grey areas between a standard understanding of 'tourists' and other categories. Sometimes, permanent residents who find the term 'tourist' to be somewhat derogatory use this term to describe tourists generally. But it is also commonly used to describe those tourists who come to the village on a semi-regular basis for their holidays. Some of these people might have in fact lived in the area for a longer time-period in the past and now return to visit their friends. Other people who are labelled in this way are simply tourists who have holidayed in Doolin for so long that they have become 'known' consociates. In either case, they have personally come to know the community to a level which is far deeper than the standard 'first-time' or 'one-off tourist', and certain members of the community have come to know them as well. 'Tourist' becomes an inappropriate label for them as it would deny this deeper relationship.

Visitors comprise a small fraction of the tourist population. In the 2003 survey of 159 of Doolin's tourists, 22% were return visitors, but of those return visitors, most (35.9%) had only visited once before, and decreasing numbers had visited twice (28.2%), or three times (25.64%). 10.26% of visitors had been to Doolin four or more times in the past, which is only 2.26% of all tourists surveyed. However, the qualitative distinction in their relationship with the locale and with locals is vastly different from one-off tourists or even those who have come back once or twice. Such visitors have a more circumspect opinion about the place which is created not only by getting to know the permanent residents, but by their longitudinal experiences of the place. An American visitor emailed me recently and explained his own relationship with Doolin:

My feelings about Doolin are very complex. I made... three trips in the last year and a half. It is far too crowded there during the summer months. Unfortunately, it has become a 'trendy' place to go and so it is fast losing the original charm that made it so special. Many of the tourists who go there to see and experience a session don't really have any understanding or appreciation of traditional Irish music. It's just the thing to do. Doolin can't handle the increase in growth... I'm also disappointed to see all of the new construction and holiday homes... I know that the residents of Doolin are appalled by this growth as well. I'm worried about Doolin's future and I don't want to see it become a tourist trap.

## V.

### Conclusions

Due to the historical circumstances of the Revival and the increasing popularity of Irish music, Doolin became a 'hotspot' for tourists. Capitalising on this, the permanent residents of Doolin built up the tourist infrastructure which allowed for the growth of mass tourism. A feedback cycle was created. Mass tourism emerged in Doolin long before the Celtic Tiger economy took off, although its beginnings are impossible to pinpoint. Understanding who mass tourists are is a difficult proposition for any researcher, and in this chapter, I have made an attempt to move beyond an anecdotal impression of this diverse and ever-changing population who move through the physically static space of the village. The tourist 'site' is a roving one, stopping and starting along commonly trodden routes. Moreover, the internationality of the tourist population that moves through destinations like Doolin is ever-shifting, and it brings people of diverse origin together. It is not a homogenous totality but an international mix of individuals and groups whose make-up changes day to day, week to week and season to season.

Globalisation often conjures images of faceless corporations and government policies, but real people with real biographies are at the core of globalising processes. This is no more true than in the globalising influence of tourism. Seen from 'below', from one particular place like Doolin, even today's mass tourists seem to be enacting a kind of pilgrimage to various 'destinations' where they interact with each other and the locale and then leave. As Gussie O'Connor said to me once, "I think we must have had someone from every country in the world in the pub at some point." Jamesie once said to me, too, "We don't have to go see the world, because the world comes to Doolin." A bird's eye view of tourist travel is very different. It is an ever-changing connection of diverse people and diverse places. In actuality, many tourists travel along routes that tend to

resemble more of an erratic, oblong flow through many places before returning 'home' rather than a mechanically forwards-and-backwards movement from 'home' to 'destination' and back 'home'<sup>12</sup>. Individual groups of tourists also travel different routes, and the totality of movement begins to evoke metaphors of webs, warps and wefts, corridors, highways and byways. Tourists often travel along common corridors like the one that runs north-south along the west coast of Ireland, but often in different directions and adding different byways off of the highways of the corridor.

So, there is no singular taxonomy of tourist 'types' that social scientists can apply universally, and the interaction between tourists and the permanent residents in touristed destinations are complicated. I have no profound alternative to the reifying 'taxonomies' that have been proffered by others, and indeed, an alternative taxonomy would simply add to the problem. Instead, I suggest that we make a return to careful ethnographic documentation of *emic* relationships and categorisations. This does not mean we cannot make cross-cultural comparisons. I simply suggest that we be very careful to avoid ossifying tourist behaviours into simplified taxonomic types. Nor does it mean that we cannot make certain distinctions about tourist patterns of behaviour. In Doolin for example, *emic* categorisations of mass tourists are loosely based on nationality or behaviour. Most of Doolin's summertime tourists come for a variety of reasons (unlike the Revival tourists of the previous era) and therefore can be called 'mass tourists'. Others, while sometimes classified as 'tourists' by permanent residents, come to work. Some of these working-tourists classify *themselves* differently though, and are loath to call themselves 'tourists'. 'Traveller' is their preferred nomenclature. Some tourists come specifically to take part in the festivals that are held annually in the area, and these tourists are descriptively categorised as "people here for the Micho Russell Festival", or as "Matchmaking tourists". Another distinction is the 'visitor', one who comes to the village to visit friends that they have made during past visits. They are more-or-less tourists, but are labelled differently (by locals and by themselves) to highlight their deeper relationship with members of the community.

As I showed in chapter 4, tourism has concretised the very 'idea' of Doolin, and has changed the very landscape. In this chapter, I have illustrated that tourists are not some monolithic population. Much more work could be done amongst tourists in Doolin and their diversity, but this chapter represents a step in that direction. It is clear that tourists are diverse, complex and impossible to place in universalistic pigeonholes. In the next chapter, we will take a look at how the social structure of the village itself has changed since the influx of

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<sup>12</sup> The exception are those visitors who plan to come only to Doolin. They are rarer though, and anecdotally, they seem to be return visitors to Doolin rather than first-timers.

visitors starting in the Revival period, and how some tourists became permanent residents.

## Chapter Six—Locals and Blow-ins

A *true* local is where you come from the ground itself-like, the ground itself. You're a part of the root.

—Jamesie

The rate of change within Ireland in recent years, particularly in the countryside, was brought home to me a couple of years ago, in a Corte Ingles restaurant in Madrid. I had picked up a newspaper to find that whole sections of my country were literally up for sale to those around me, sipping their morning coffee.

—Jim Mac Laughlin (1997:1)

Blow ins, a name that had originated from the flotsam of wrecked vessels that had blown in from the sea. Blow ins.

—Edna O'Brien (2003:52)

### I.

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the social classification of two important *emically* delineated categories of permanent residents in Doolin, namely 'locals' and 'blow-ins'. Any understanding of this classificatory system in Doolin is bound by certain constraints inherent in the definitions of these terms. In general, locals are those people who were born in the locale, and blow-ins are people who were born elsewhere but now live permanently in the village. In Doolin, a blow-in cannot become a local in their lifetime, but their children are sometimes considered locals. Others would not even consider these descendents 'full' locals though. Furthermore, in other places in Ireland, the boundaries and usage of these categories vary slightly. Therefore, to a certain extent, the terms are polysemous and negotiable. This chapter is not only about the different ways in which these identifications are defined in Doolin, but how people manoeuvre within them, and the limitation of those manoeuvres.

In the context of Doolin, there are relatively clear boundaries that distinguish between locals and blow-ins, but I argue here these labels shift in varying contexts. Further identifiers, such as being an *Irish* blow-in or being the child of one local and one blow-in, create a shifting negotiation and usage of these terms in different contexts and amongst different groups of permanent residents. In other words, I recognise that the basic distinction between 'insiders'



and 'outsiders' is starting point for exploring finer differences between permanent residents of the village.

Certainly, there are also other significant and salient categorisations at work in Killilagh Parish. Tourists, analysed in detail in the last chapter, are one group of people that are identified as clearly distinct from all other permanent residents. Another distinction that might be worth pursuing in future research that is not covered in the present thesis is one based on economic livelihoods. In the Irish village of Inveresk, Peace (2001) describes a community which has created quite distinct dichotomies between groups of permanent residents based on their economic roles. Fishermen, small business owners (shopkeepers and publicans), and farmers all created distinct 'domains' in Inveresk, which are also physical in that there are fairly clear boundaries between 'the country', 'the village', and 'the pier' (*ibid.*:14-30). But these domains are also discursive. Within the permanent population in Doolin, the dichotomy between farmers and those who work full- or part-time in the tourism economy, while not as clearly demarcated as in Inveresk, might be an area for further analysis. Indeed, while there is a notable portion of the local population that survives solely on farming, many farmers employ a mixed economy in the parish. For example, oftentimes they keep cattle, but also run a B&B. In other words, a classificatory distinction based on economic activity alone is blurred in Doolin as it frequently is in small, rural communities. Like in Inveresk however, Killilagh Parish might be divided into physical 'farming' and 'tourist-oriented' domains. The farming domain is inland and away from the main roads. The tourist domain, the primary focus of this study, runs along the main roads through the parish, out to the pier, along the coastline, and centres especially around the sub-villages of Fisherstreet and Roadford.

The distinction between locals and blow-ins is given special attention in this thesis for the simple reason that it is the most salient and important distinction between permanent residents. Blow-ins have become a prominent and influential aspect of the social, political and economic life of the village. Furthermore, the focused analysis on the relations between these two groups feeds into the rest of the thesis because, in Doolin, it is the blow-ins who have all but completely appropriated the traditional Irish music scene.

At this level of classification, we are really dealing with what Peace has called the "social architecture" of the village (*ibid.*). To contend with the finer grained interactions between locals and blow-ins, it will be useful to call on the phenomenology and social psychological work of the German sociologist, Schutz<sup>1</sup>. Two concepts in particular profitably inform the material in this chapter. First, his multifaceted analysis of 'strangers' and their attempts to enter another

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<sup>1</sup> Schütz is alternatively translated from German as 'Schütz' or 'Schuetz'. I will use both spellings here to correspond with the individual publications from which I cite.

cultural group (1944) is highly applicable. Secondly, the distinction he makes between consociates and contemporaries (1970: 170, 178-199, 218-231) is a constructive one.

## II. Locals

Jamesie and I were sitting in his cottage sipping some *poteen*<sup>2</sup> he'd acquired from somewhere. It was "good, *quare* stuff—plum-flavoured", and it warmed us against the cold autumn air that crept in through the stone walls and from under the doorjamb. We'd been talking about his family for awhile, and the 'auld days', and I asked him how long his family had lived in Doolin.

"We're supposed to have been here for the last five hundred years and a bit over it," he said. "So, yes, in that way, I suppose, I *am* a local at this stage, but there's still some people who—their families have been here a lot *longer* than that."

I laughed at his characterisation of himself as only *tenuously* 'local', confident that he must be joking. Instead, he ignored my laughter and continued in all seriousness, "And ah, they would consider themselves *them* the real locals. Which they are."

Completely amazed, I asked, "So—so they would actually say that 500 years is not enough to be a local?"

"Well, you'd be just about," he responded, changing his mind slightly, qualifying his statement. "Yeah, you would be considered a local at this stage." He paused then to choose his words. "Like, a *true* local is where you come from the ground itself—like, the ground itself. You're a part of the root. Put it that way."

Putting the notion of 'local-ness' in these naturalistic terms is intentional, and only secondarily metaphoric. There is a real sense of physical and psychic connection with the actual landscape amongst some locals, especially in the older generation. This connection goes to the core of what it is to be 'local' in the strictest, most sacred understanding of the term. Interestingly, the word *ground* is used to refer to the specific locale of Doolin, the place itself, not generally as in 'the earth' or 'the dirt'. People call their plots of land their 'ground'. Fishermen call their specific fishing-grounds their 'ground'. There is a belonging and an ownership all at once. The Doolin 'ground' is bordered along the church parish lines. Someone said to me once, "You get people living in Ennistymon or whatever below in the pub and 'Oh, they're locals'. They are not locals! How can you be *local* when you're from another *parish*?" For some, like Jamesie, the

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<sup>2</sup> Poteen, or *poitín* in Gaelic (pronounced po-cheen), is privately distilled whisky (Carson 1996:65).

boundaries are tighter than that. "If you got someone who—say—lived anymore than four miles from here, three miles from here, two miles even, they wouldn't be considered locals *atall-atall*," he said. People from neighbouring towns and villages are not 'locals.' They have their own ground. Even people in the countryside between towns might only be considered 'local' to that 'ground'. Jamesie continued,

To become local, your blood has to be here for a few years. It's like if you're germinating some plant or something, and you want to get the proper one, you have to get it in the ground for so many years, for so many generations, so many times, before it will actually become the right *seed*, from the ground. Well, exactly the same thing happens with people. It's the same way.

The imagery of 'coming from the ground' is reciprocal though. He explained that the local in turn changes the ground. "You have to become *part* of it yourself-like. You make part of it yourself. You *build* a part of it yourself. And that's how you become a true local." So, the 'true local' is from the ground, shaped and fed by it, but the local also changes and shapes the ground, adds to it, 'builds part if it' themselves. The 'ground' and the 'local' become physically connected, and made of the same stuff. It reminds me of something an Irish journalist once wrote: "When you look at beautiful scenery in other countries, you appreciate it in the way that you would a painting or a postcard, whereas in Ireland, you appreciate it as something that is actually *in you*" (Molony 2003:16, *italics in original*).

A 'half-local' is someone who is descended from one local parent and one non-local parent. Even if someone were to make this distinction, in practice that person would be treated as a full-on 'local' in every respect if they'd been raised in the parish. It is a qualified version of local-ness issued only in rare circumstances. In some cases, this 'half-local' status might be used by friends to tease a person, but since it is not a salient marker of local-ness, and therefore has no real value, it isn't used vituperatively. Jamesie explained that only the children of half-locals would be considered full locals. So by this reckoning, it takes at least three generations to become 'local'. This mirrors the definition presented in a report for the European Cultural Foundation which states that "[t]here is a time-honoured custom in many Irish communities of describing anyone whose family has not belonged to the locality for at least three generations as 'outsiders' or 'blow-ins'. This is not confined to rural areas but flourishes in tightly-knit groups throughout the country" (Burke, n.d.).

In large part, the way that the term 'local' is used depends on who is speaking to whom. When permanent residents of Doolin are speaking to each

other, one's local-ness might be debated and defined in fairly specific terms. The exact parameters of the parish lines and the location of a person's natal house might be brought into the conversation as evidence for or against their local status. A person's ancestral pedigree might be recalled, and more rarely, their relations in other districts might qualify their standing. Significantly, these conversations will not generally occur when the person being discussed is present. Indicative of its value, to question someone's clout as a local can be offensive if one's relationships with them is not fairly close.

On one level then, there is a kind of psychic connection that some locals feel with 'the ground'. But kinship itself, even if one only partially comes from this particular 'ground', is also highly valued. This has been illustrated in other contexts as well. In a north Yorkshire village, Phillips noted that "[k]inship is one of the central markers of difference" between insiders and outsiders (1986:143). Strathern's study of Elmdon (1981) is another example of the importance of kinship in defining 'localness'. Doolin, like many small communities, is a place where people claim that 'everyone is related to everyone else' in one way or another. As we shall see below and in chapter 8, this is not literally true. There are other ways in which people come to belong to the community, but the 'rhetoric of interrelatedness' reveals the importance of kinship as a marker of belonging (*ibid.*).

Occasionally, people who haven't been born in the locale might claim that they've *become* 'locals', but this is swiftly and thoroughly denied by almost all permanent residents, locals and incomers. Individuals who would be so cavalier would not do so very often in front of locals, or would quickly learn not to. One would be seen as extremely presumptuous and pretentious, and if one pursued such a claim, might even be labelled a 'Plastic Paddy', the ultimate insult. The term implies that the incomer is a fake and 'puts on' their local-ness or Irish-ness, when in fact they have no claim to it. Surprisingly, all of this is in sharp contrast to another Clare village nearby where Casey writes that blow-ins (or, what she labels 'newcomers') are "[e]ffectively, [a] new type of 'local'" (2003:50).

Not everyone draws such distinct lines around who is or is not a local. For many younger people especially, 'local' is a much broader category that might include all of northwest Clare. People from Lisdoonvarna, Ennistymon, Liscannor, Moher, Moymore, Kilshanny, and even places as far away as Fanore, Corofin and Kilfenora might be considered locals. Moreover, terms like 'half-local' are only rarely heard amongst younger residents. This generational difference in reckoning who is a local was highlighted sardonically by a young man in the village:

Say, "subject A" moved here twenty years ago, brought up a family... All their kids are born here. They'd probably be considered blow-ins—the kids—by the older locals. The kids their own age don't care. They're locals as far as they're concerned. But... more elderly people, the *older* people, they're the people that think about it. They have nothing *better* to think about!

One could argue that these distinctions are simply less important for younger people who have less interest in creating boundaries. It is conceivable that delineating clear boundaries become more important as these younger villagers grow older, and enter more seriously into local economic and political affairs. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to argue that the symbolic capital of local-ness is simply decreasing amongst the younger generations. As Mac Laughlin wrote,

[T]his is still an Ireland where 'new localisms', themselves the product of 'glocalisation', still vie with 'older localisms'. Old localisms of the past were based on principle of exclusion and insulation. They tended to minimise contact with the foreign world and maintained strong, closed and prophylactic boundaries between that which was 'inside' and that which was 'outside'. The localisms which are now emerging in Ireland are of a quite different nature and are far more extrovert. (1997:13)

Joining the European Union was not just a political act. It was a mental shift, a departure from a simple opposition to the English and an entrance as a 'modern Ireland' into the global community (*ibid.*). The desire to become a 'modern nation' cannot be underrated among young Irish people. Travel is easier today, and pop culture from America and England is readily available. Young people desire these things, and are more than willing to adapt themselves to correspond with what they perceive to be 'modernity'. While some young people in the village are quite reflexive and proud of their local-ness, many want the excitement of the broader world and can't wait to move away. Local-ness is not abhorred, it is simply not as important anymore. For younger villagers, obsession with the locale, with these finer distinctions which can be exclusive, is sometimes perceived as 'provincial' and antiquated.

When one is speaking to a tourist, whose knowledge of the community is limited, and for whom these distinctions are complicated, the local moniker is used more liberally. Anyone who's Irish is generally labelled a 'local'. This is usually a matter of convenience due to the limited nature of conversations that residents commonly have with tourists. If a more in-depth conversation with a tourist emerges, and the conversation happens to light upon the topic, the distinctions might be made. But generally, the Irish who live in the area but are

not from there are labelled 'locals'. If a permanent resident is from another country, essentially if they have a non-Irish accent, their status is explained in more accurate detail: "He's American but he lives here." In other words, the term 'local' is used much more loosely in discussions with tourists because it's easier and more convenient to do so.

For foreign tourists, it is an important part of their holiday experience to interact with the 'Irish people' with their reputation for friendliness, good wit and conversation. And since tourists often equate Irish-ness with local-ness, the broader equation between the Irish accent and local-ness makes sense to them. So, even Irish incomers might be introduced to tourists as 'locals' to spread out the responsibility of these interactions. For example, if a group of permanent residents is sitting at the pub having a morning coffee, and a group of tourists engages this group in conversation (or the other way around), it is in the interest of the 'true' locals to not dwell too much on distinctions between 'local' and blow-in categories so that the focus of the tourists' attention is spread evenly.

This broader characterisation of local-ness is also used for convenience in other situations, even amongst permanent residents. One example I observed occurred when a non-local Irishman ordered a meal at the pub, and as a food-server, I was instructed to go into the kitchen to tell the cooks to make it a 'catholic' portion because "it's for a local". When bartending, I was always told to "mind the locals" or to "see if the locals want anything else" before closing time. In these cases and situations like them, all permanent residents are treated and labelled as 'locals'. This is understandable since the blow-ins are consociates too. Local or not, all permanent residents must be treated well to maintain good social relations in the village, and a special, 'local' level of service must be provided.

### III.

#### Blow-ins

Sitting with Jamesie in his cottage that autumnal afternoon, we drained our glasses of *poteen* and rolled cigarettes. I asked him about people who lived in Doolin but who weren't born here. He got up to put the kettle on and said,

People then, who come and *live* here, and *marry* here, and *stay* here, are called 'blow-ins'. That's what we call them: blow-ins. Like, they can be blowing out as fast as they blow in. Because they have no roots here—nothing to hold them here.

Blow-ins are defined as permanent residents of a locale who are not originally from there. All international members of the community are called 'blow-ins', and Irish incomers from other locales are too. For the incomer, the

status of the blow-in is as much as they can achieve in their lifetime. Even when a blow-in is introduced to a tourist as a 'local', or is accorded 'local service' by a barman, the incomer knows that this does not allow him to label himself this way. One villager put it in more colourful terms one time: they "could live here until the day [they] grow daisies," he said, "and the day [they] grow daisies, [they'd] still be a blow-in. [They'd] never become a local." Strathern documented a similarly strict sense of localness in Elmdon where an incomer who'd lived in the village for "only forty odd years" was still considered a 'newcomer' (1981:6).

The blow-in may be the example *par excellence* of what Simmel famously called 'the stranger'—not the one "who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow" (1971[1908]:143). He writes that the stranger is "fixed within a certain spatial circle—or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries—but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities to it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it" (*ibid.*). In this sense, the 'stranger' or the 'blow-in' exists as a common and paradoxical feature of many rural places. As Ardener once wrote, "[r]emote places are full of strangers" (1989:218) whereas people in urban or suburban places are not as concerned with these kinds of categorisations (*ibid.*).

The general editor of *The Encarta World English Dictionary* recently included the term 'blow-in' in a list of words that have just attained "new currency" (Soukhanov 2000). According to the editor's etymology,

The noun *blow-in* is derived from the verb phrase *blow in*, a slang term... a *blow-in* was "somebody who is not from your community, and doesn't belong" (*ibid.* italics in original).

In other European contexts, incomers are less clearly delineated. Frankenberg found that 'outsiders', called 'strangers' in the Welsh community he lived in, seemed to exist along a very unimpeded continuum and that the term shifted quite liberally to even occasionally include 'deviant' locals (1957:18-19). Similarly, Kohn found a complex arena of fluid identifications on a Scottish island (1997:16-20) which, she argued, were more like points on a continuum than distinctly bounded categories (*ibid.*:23). Elsewhere, clearer definitional boundaries exist as they do in Doolin, perhaps more like lumps in a bell-curve than distinct categories (Phillips 1986, Ennew 1980, Waldren 1996, Ahmed and Mynors 1994).

The term 'blow-in' may have some antiquity in Ireland. In the auld days, strangers in the community were called *séid isteachs*, which literally means 'blow-ins'. The Irish phrase was later anglicised to 'shadies' which exposed the



suspicion locals felt towards them. Later, the term was simply translated into English (Stack 2004: personal communication).

Like many people along the west coast of Ireland, Jamesie calls himself 'Black Irish', one who claims partial descent from the crew of the Spanish Armada who were shipwrecked along the west coast in 1588 during a failed attempt to invade England via Ireland. Although proud of this distinction, he is also hesitant to proclaim himself fully local in the quote above. Another informant spoke similarly about his descent from the Norman invaders. In other words, international 'blow-ins' are nothing new in Ireland. Neither is the effect of globalisation on Irish identity. The Famine created a global Irish Diaspora so massive that today, while there are only around four million people living in Ireland itself, there are an estimated seventy million people of Irish descent scattered around the world (Davies 1999:650). The deep sense of belonging to, not just the isle of Ireland, but to specific locales within Ireland, is expressed powerfully and often in *sean-nós* songs, and the uprooting backdrop of the Famine is a common theme. For the Diaspora, that sense of belonging translated into nostalgia. For those who remained, it may have helped crystallise local identities. Following the War of Independence from Britain, a Civil War between the supporters of Michael Collins and Eamon De Valera created deadly acrimony within the remaining Irish population (*ibid.*:760). That relatively recent bitter feud must be kept in mind when one considers the fact that non-local Irish, too, are 'blow-ins' who may be suspect political refugees from the 'other side'. Strict definitions that police the borders of belonging to specific places are by no means unique to northwest County Clare or to Ireland, but these historical events have no doubt helped shape and justify the nature of that policing. My point is that issues surrounding identity, belonging and globalisation are nothing new, nor are they confined in the Irish case to the English-speaking world alone.

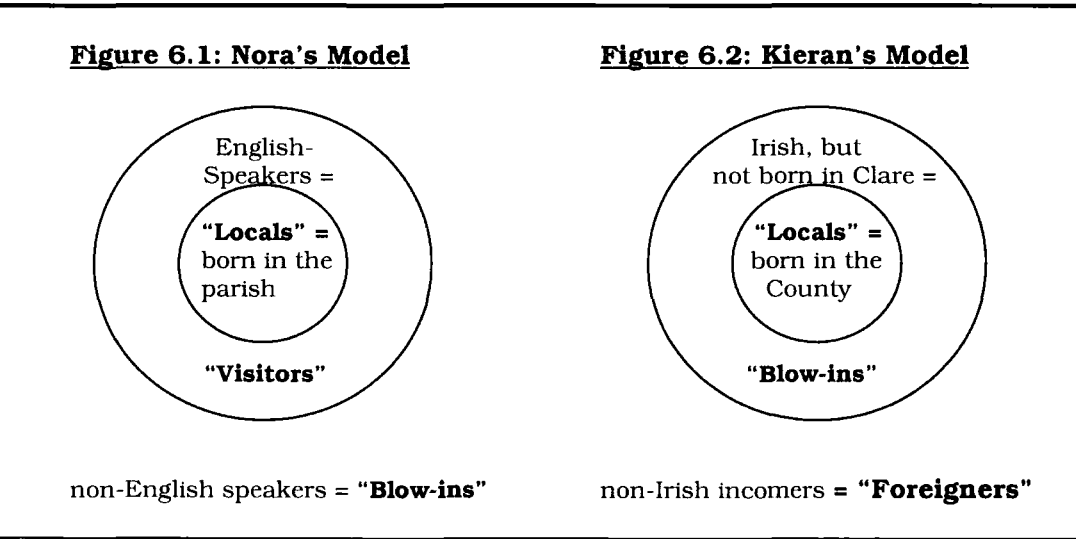
Like the category of the 'local', 'blow-in' is variously defined and polysemously used depending on who uses it and in what context. Indeed, in other villages and towns, categories of persons that fall conceptually between the 'local' and the 'tourist' are defined differently (cf. Peace 2001, Casey 2003). In Doolin though, it is applied to all people who live in the locale but who weren't born there. Earlier, we saw how incomers were sometimes labelled 'locals' as a matter of convenience either to avoid complicated explanations for tourists, or as a simple way to label all permanent residents. Importantly, the boundaries surrounding the incomers themselves are not fixed, and are perceived differently by different people even within Doolin. For example, Nora has a strict definition of 'local'-ness, but she has another term that she considers more respectful for incomers whose native language was English: 'visitors'. Therefore, only those

who lived in the area who are not from there and furthermore do not speak English as a first language are blow-ins.

Kieran on the other hand told me, “you have locals, you have blow-ins, and then you have foreigners.” Importantly, ‘locals’, for Kieran, are people born in County Clare, not just Killilagh Parish. Blow-ins are Irish incomers from other counties, and foreigners are non-Irish. In his determination, language is not the marker of difference, nationality is. And like Nora’s opinion about the term ‘blow-in’, he told me that international incomers wouldn’t actually be described using the term ‘foreigner’ because it was distasteful.

Yeah well, you wouldn’t describe an English person as a ‘foreigner’. You’d describe them as an ‘English person’. Like, “John—ah, he’s English”... John’s from England. He lives in Doolin.”

Like Nora, Kieran wanted to be sensitive to the feelings of friends that he considered ‘foreigners’ by not actually using his own label. He stressed that, while there is a difference in classification, these incomers should be imbued with personality and a name out of simple respect.



Both of these definitions limit the extent to which outsiders may be included into a deeper level of belonging to the village. One is based on language while the other is based on nationality. Nora’s and Kieran’s own social positions in the village are revealing though. Nora is local through and through. From her local perspective, a more restrictive definition of local-ness relates to a more open definition of belonging for outsiders. She has the social capital of ‘local-ness’ and can afford to be more liberal in her conceptualisation of outsiders. For Kieran, an Irish incomer to the area, his definition of a local is far wider than Nora’s, while his definition of a blow-in is more strict than more common, ‘standard’ definitions

which would include Irish *and* international incomers. He knows he's not local, but he also limits conceptual access to his own social status. In other words, each of these people have restricted the entry into the group that they themselves belong to, while widening the adjacent categories. Both of these cases illustrate the ways in which one's own classification of people reflects one's own position in the classificatory system.

Despite these more fine-grained and individualistic definitional variances, in one requisite way, the blow-in attribution is easier to demarcate than local-ness. The line between locals (of any sort) and blow-ins have to do with the fate of one's birthplace. If one is born in Doolin, one has at least entered into the realm of local-ness. According to looser definitions, one may be considered local if one is from 'northwest Clare', and in the loosest sense, if they are a Clare-man or a Clare-woman. According to stricter definitions about local-ness, some people born in Doolin may not be considered *fully* local, but they are at least *partially* local, and therefore, not blow-ins, visitors, foreigners, or 'outsiders' by any label. In other words, blow-ins by any definition are not local at all, and never will be.

Not just anyone passing through is considered a blow-in though. Tourists are not blow-ins, and even working-tourists who stay in the village for a month or two are not considered blow-ins (see previous chapter). There has to be certain level of commitment to living in the community to be considered a blow-in. There is no specific threshold involved here, but oftentimes, people said that after about a year, one might start to be considered a blow-in. A year is a convenient marker, especially since it implies that a person has lived through at least one winter-season when there are few tourists around, very few employment opportunities, the weather is generally very poor, and there is very little to do. Staying through the winter is a kind of catalyst then because it implies a deeper level of commitment to the community itself than to simple monetary gain.

#### IV.

#### **Negotiations and Limitations of Belonging**

The term 'blow-in' is occasionally used derogatorily as is implied in the above definitions, and for that reason it is recognised here as a sensitive term. Some people, locals and incomers, are offended by the term's usage and refuse to use it. However, there is no other singular label that is regularly used. In fact, the term 'blow-in' is a very salient one in Doolin, and indeed throughout Ireland. For that reason, I use it here, but needless to say, I do not intend its use derogatorily. Kieran stressed that,

I'm a blow-in, but like, I don't *consider* myself as a 'blow in'.

I'm a *person*. And I'm a person of equal value to a local. So I don't consider myself of less *value* than a local, whereas, I suppose, locals do consider blow-ins as of less value than themselves.

Obviously, as a person who falls betwixt and between the categories of 'insider' and 'outsider', Kieran is very aware of the value judgements placed on these categorisations. He told me that he tries not to think about these things too much because, to him, "there isn't much *value* in the *value*-system. You know, I don't pay much heed to it myself."

When conflicts erupt, the enunciation of a person's blow-in status can be used to create a sense of exclusion from the local community, no matter how long a person's resided in the locale. It is a term that reminds everyone involved that a blow-in is not, and never will become, a local. The offensiveness of categorisation cuts both ways though. I remember a joke a couple of long-term blow-ins told me once which also highlights the tensions that can emerge from these processes of classification:

"There are two kinds of people in Doolin—B.I.'s and I.B.'s", one of them said.

I donned the appropriately quizzical facial expression, waiting for the punch-line. The two men smiled at each other and then explained: "Blow-ins and In-Breds".

Importantly, blow-ins are *not* excluded as full members of the community. In fact, as has been noted elsewhere, "such designations do not effect day-to-day interaction... people might be slow to accept a newcomer, but it does not really make any difference to their behaviour" (Strathern 1981:7). As another informant said to me,

I would say that [Doolin]'s very different, and I would say it's why it's been so easy for so many quote-unquote 'blow-ins' to live here and eventually get absorbed into the village. They're still blow-ins, but they're very much apart of the place. Everyone would think of them as part of the place.

Any separation between locals and incomers in terms of praxis and social relations is a fluid one, as has been pointed out in other contexts (Kohn 2002b). Blow-ins in Doolin are heavily involved in the social life and politics of the community, especially of course blow-ins with some sort of long-term social or monetary investment in the village. The blow-ins' inclusion into village life flows through different channels and to different degrees of success. Kinship ties through marriage (or more rarely through a distant consanguinial relation) are an extremely compelling means of inclusion. Blow-ins who have established a clear economic role in the village are taken seriously, and incomers who do have

economic or kin relations in the village often find themselves getting involved in local politics. These structural means of involvement are obviously influential, but social inclusion will ultimately fall short if blow-ins fail to create and maintain good relations with neighbours and friends. Even extremely successful business owners will effectively be ostracised if they are unwilling or unable to adapt to the social life of the village. This actually goes for locals as well when they fail to engage with people socially. This means of inclusion is not overtly obvious, and is dependent on daily behaviours and interactions with friends and neighbours. Generalised reciprocity, for example, is a prerequisite for proper social behaviour amongst consociates. A liberal willingness to assist others with even small tasks is simply 'neighbourly', but it is significant. On the other hand, in this historically agricultural social climate, independence and privacy are also highly regarded. Maintaining a balance then between 'helping out' and 'meddling' can be a trick, and sometimes the incomer stumbles along to find this delicate posture. Interestingly, in a few cases, urban Irish blow-ins fare worse than international blow-ins who originated in rural areas.

Contributing something to the community is seen as an important vehicle of acceptance. A half-Irish half-American blow-in, told me modestly, "I don't do much for the community,"

but every year, I—you know—like something I did last week, I donate my time. Like, every year, I cook for the kids. And *shit* like *that*—people notice that. And they go, "Why is he doing that?" The reason I do it is—ah—first of all, it's fun. And you always have to give back a *little* bit. And it's four or five hours of my time. But that four or five hours is fucking worth a *lot* of points around here.

Volunteering for a local committee, setting up a 'quiz night' to raise money for a local cause, or conscientiously helping out one's neighbours are all examples of contributions that 'people notice'. These activities earn blow-ins social and symbolic capital. Respect leads to acceptance.

Another blow-in talked about how establishing kin-relations in the village is a potent and immediate way to become accepted, but that acceptance is not dependent on it:

[H]aving a connection to the community helps—if you're actually married into somebody who's a regular part of the community. But there are people who have not married into the community who are very much accepted, who do regular jobs around for other people, who kind of keep their noses out of other people's business, and yet show up for things that—say, the community is raising money for something. They make a

point of coming to those things and they contribute and they help.

Not surprisingly, kinship ties are an extremely important marker of belonging to the community. Marrying in to a local family brings one into an immediate and powerful set of relationships in the parish, but interestingly this informant qualifies her statement, making sure that I understood that people who weren't married in still can be "very much accepted". In other words, kinship ties are not hard and fast markers which determine belonging. She diplomatically downplays the importance of kinship somewhat, I suspect, because she herself is married to a local man. Out of respect, she doesn't want to claim that she 'belongs more' somehow than other blow-ins who are not related to locals through kin ties.

Economically, incomers have become a central driving force in the recent success of the village's tourist economy. In this sense, Doolin is not unique. The phenomenon of the "incomer as entrepreneur" has been noted in other contexts as well (Ardener 1989:219-220). Numerous businesses such as B&Bs, restaurants and shops are owned and operated by blow-ins. Two of the three pubs are owned by incomers who are originally from other parts of Clare. Both of the traditional Irish music shops in the village are owned by international blow-ins. Most of the general tourist-oriented gift shops are owned and run by blow-ins, too. The service industries in Doolin are also dominated by the incomer population. These are the people employed at B&Bs to clean the rooms, serve meals at restaurants, tend the bar at the pubs, and work as sales clerks in the shops. Suffice it to say, incomers are very heavily involved in the local tourist economy. On the other hand, it is not by any means run solely by the blow-ins. A local family runs the ferry company which brings huge numbers of tourists out to the Aran Islands every summer. Three out of four of the village's hostels are owned by local families. Many locals own and run B&Bs, a few of the restaurants, and the village's grocery store. The point I want to make here is that the local tourist industry was historically built-up by both locals and blow-ins. It has been a co-operative development, and has provided blow-ins with an important and influential economic role.

The same cannot be said of the farming economy in the parish, which is not surprising. For those who have come to live in Doolin, farming is not much of an option given the limits and value on farmland, the conservative nature of inheritance, and I would suspect, the less attractive nature of farm work for incomers. A few blow-ins have married into farming families, but of those that I know, they have all created or obtained work in the tourist oriented economy. This is partially due to the sexual division of labour in the farming economy

(farming is generally considered men's work) coupled with the fact that most blow-ins who have married locals are women. By comparison, farming may provide restrictively limited economic opportunities whereas tourism is sometimes seen as nearly limitless<sup>3</sup>. Interestingly though, a few blow-ins have entered the small fishing economy in Doolin. The difference here may lie in the slightly less limited nature of fishing resources, and probably more to the point because fishing is no longer thriving in Doolin as it once was.

The limited nature of rural resources extends to land generally. Land is resource that is carefully guarded, and locals will not quickly sell tracts to outsiders unless they are known and respected. Due to the appeal of the landscape, property prices in and around Killilagh parish have skyrocketed in recent years however, and the temptation to sell tracts of land to outside property developers who are not residents has obviously increased. As a corollary, so have tensions. One case in which some land with a great view of the Aran Islands was sold to an outsider who built a series of holiday homes was ubiquitously decried in the locale. It was cited often during the Doolin Development Plan meetings as an example of how *not* to develop the village. In County Clare, this casually conservative stance concerning the sale of land to outsiders even entered into the realm of official planning and development policy for a time before it was contested in the courts. The county council attempted to implement a policy whereby even blow-ins would be ineligible to build homes in "vulnerable areas or in rural areas deemed to be under development pressure" (Deegan 1999:i-page18). These areas included a fifty mile stretch of coastline which included Killilagh parish. Locally, people do sell properties to blow-ins. It is far from uncommon, but these attempted policies reveal the kind of resistance that can emerge when a limited and valuable resource is sold to outsiders.

Many blow-ins participate in community affairs by sitting on local committees as well, especially the ones who have lived in the village longest and have more of a vested interest in the place. That vested interest, social or economic or both, provides more *gravitas* to their opinions. Notably, blow-ins are sometimes more outspoken in village committees than locals. One informant gave me an example of why this occurs:

I think of a thing as simple as the parent's council in a school. Now, there are quite a number of blow-ins on the parents' council or on the board of trustees or whatever. And the reason for that is that we come from a different background as regards

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<sup>3</sup> When we first arrived in Doolin during the summer of 2002, tourism seemed to be ever-expanding. I remember a publican telling me that it's turning into a "twelve-month season". The summer of 2003 however was much slower, and I am told that the 2004 season has not broken this downward trend. It may be that Doolin has in fact seen the limits of this industry as well. Moreover, the fact that *some* competition exists in the tourist economy implies that it is to some extent a limited resource.



education, where we simply think it's really important for the parents to be concerned, and where it's important to have a 'say'. Whereas many of the local people, many have the idea that you were told what to do by the priest, by the teacher, by the lawyer, by the doctor. So you didn't speak up, and it's up to them to go in and have a say. That's fading but it's there still.

So, blow-ins, especially international blow-ins, might bring with them a different set of values that motivate their level of involvement. This informant also explained that one reason for this *seemingly* intense level of blow-in involvement in community affairs is that blow-ins, even if they've 'married in to the village', have far fewer kin relations and can more easily state their opinions publicly without offending a large proportion of the attendees. In Frankenberg's well-known study of local Welsh politics, he encountered similar circumstances (1957:18, 78-88). Another blow-in in Doolin, a man who has lived in the area for decades, explained the level of incomers involvement in local politics this way:

If there's resistance, say, to planning permissions to a road coming through, or a widening of a road, taking away the bridge or rerouting the river, if people get up in arms about it, you'll find that it's blow-ins that are making all the noise. Well, of course, there's good reasons for that. First of all, they come here and have chosen to be here because they like the place. And secondly, and perhaps more to the point, they do not suffer under obligation to anyone else, whereas a local person is probably related in some way, has some connection, to the person they'd be protesting against. So they would either feel disloyal, or as is often the case, that they'll pay for it—that that person will have a resentment for them and get them back, which has happened. So, there might be even a tendency to agreeing with you, and giving lip-service to something a blow-in is saying, but when it comes down to it, you won't find them signing any paper and putting their names on it.

So, sometimes, blow-ins are more conservative than locals about 'development' and more open about making their case. As this passage illustrates, part of the reason is that blow-ins sometimes have a rather more romantic image of the locale than locals and therefore are more resistant to developments that they view as damaging. On the other hand, the passage also illustrates the fact that since incomers have fewer obligatory connections in the parish, they are more able to voice their opinions.

In a series of village meetings in the spring of 2003 to produce a local six-year 'development plan', I noted that blow-ins spoke up at least as much as locals did. Many of the locals clearly felt uncomfortable or at least unwilling to publicly suggest guidelines that might later affect their neighbours and relatives. Doing so would be seen as 'interfering' with someone else's independence. But when everyone met in the pub after the meetings, locals were much more vocal. In

amongst a casual circle of friends and relatives, they could easily express their opinions about any number of developmental ideas. This reluctance to get involved can be hugely frustrating to those who spend large amounts of time and energy trying to organise the community for one reason or another, and again the comparison with Frankenberg's work is apt.

It is often said that blow-ins have a very different kind of attachment to the landscape and the community, one that is far more romantic, than the locals do. In the passage above, my informant pointed out that blow-ins "have chosen to be here because they like the place". This fact, though obvious, is significant. For some, romance results in a strong preservation instinct, a reluctance to allow changes to any aspect of the village that would radically alter the way Doolin was when they first 'fell in love with the place'. In other words, the intensity of 'falling in love' leads some blow-ins to romanticise their 'moment' of arrival. Changes that occur beyond that 'moment' are to be lamented. From this point of view, some 'romantic' incomers fail to recognise that their original impression of the place was more like a snapshot of a moving vehicle—constantly dynamic and changing—than an immersion into a static, calm, rural idyll which is only now becoming 'ruined' by change. Conversely, for locals who have grown up with constant change, recent developments are not to be lamented because they don't interfere with their longer-term relationship with the place.

At one particular 'development meeting' dominated by almost all locals, the discussion began to revolve around the continued dramatic growth of buildings centred on tourist commerce, and how it leads some tourists, incomers and locals to conclude that Doolin has been 'ruined'. A particularly influential local man responded with the comment, "the only ones who are disappointed with Doolin are the *ones who come here* [i.e., blow-ins]. They think it's ruined because they want it to be like it was when they came." Locals, he went on to say, have always seen it change.

Doolin, and Ireland generally, is by no means unique in this respect. To cite a similar ethnographic example, Ennew found that incomers in Scotland first settled there because they were "attracted by the romantic image" of the place (1980:117). Comparably, she points out that this image is much more intense among the younger incomers who are much more vocal about lamenting development than the older ones. This is congruent with what I observed in Doolin, and I would postulate two explanations. First, through time, the older blow-ins have come to recognise that change and development is inevitable. Younger blow-ins have a very fresh 'image of the moving vehicle' and are closer to the moment of intensity of 'falling in love with the place'. Furthermore, as older blow-ins have gained more extensive consociate relationships with others in the

locale, their opinions about who is making a given change and why might become more informed and less reactionary. Secondly, as Ennew points out, many younger incomers have a much harder time adjusting to local life because they are often more inflexible about how they define the 'good life' (*ibid.*). Their definitions do not always match locals' definitions. Discouraged and disappointed, many leave (*ibid.*). Relatively new blow-ins in Doolin, if they remain similarly inflexible about their 'romantic' image of the place, will join the disappointed and move on. Those who remain and 'grow older together' (Schutz 1970:187) with the locale are the ones who are more willing to compromise with a more dynamic reality.

Regardless of the level of romance that blow-ins feel for the place (and I would argue that there must be at least *some* attraction there for them to have made the decision to stay in such a rural place with its quiet and rain-drenched winters, limited economic opportunities and limited social outlets), blow-ins ubiquitously told me stories about what it was like when they first came to Doolin. These similarly toned stories almost always started with the phrase, "When I first came here...". It was like a genre of folktale. Even cynical blow-ins told these stories, but simply put a more ominous spin on the tale's moral.

So, incomers have become intensely involved in community affairs, and indeed, this is a necessary requirement for acceptance. However, too much involvement can easily backfire. Blow-ins, no matter how long they've lived in the village, can be seen as 'meddlers'. I was often told that, for blow-ins, there's a fine balance between 'giving something back' to the community and 'sticking your nose in other peoples' business'. Furthermore, there is only so much involvement that incomers are 'allowed'.

A friend of ours who had married in to the village related a story that reveals the level of involvement that blow-ins are allowed. She was helping some of her local friends go door to door in a neighbouring village to raise funds for a charity. Her status as a non-Irish blow-in, even after having lived in the area for twenty years, meant that was met with politeness, but she wasn't able to raise any money. She gave up the effort, leaving the fundraising to her local friends who were quite successful in garnishing the necessary funds. Similar stories were not uncommon.

I myself had an experience which is worth relating here, too. As I have mentioned before, the local people submitted a village 'development plan' to the county council as a supplement a regional development plan that was being drafted by the county bureaucrats in 2003. Essentially, the Doolin people wanted to 'have their say' about their village, and didn't want the county council to totally dictate their future. Since I knew a few of the people who wanted to

create the local submission, and simply because I had the time and a computer, I was asked to get involved in the process. I was very hesitant to do so because as an outsider and as an anthropologist researching the situation<sup>4</sup>, I felt strongly that I was in no position to make suggestions about Doolin's future development. After some discussion though, I agreed to be the secretary for the committee assigned to create the plan. That way, I could contribute but I would be able to remain outside the decision-making processes.

As secretary, I attended a series of local and regional meetings—some informational, some 'brainstorming sessions'. I took minutes and typed up all of the reports, but made no substantive contributions myself. Most of these meetings were with a small committee of volunteers, but a few were attended by county councillors and two were large public meetings. The committee solicited and compiled ideas for developmental guidelines from members of the community, but deciding what should go in a formal submission to the county council became an issue. There was a strong sense in the committee meetings that a community consensus needed to be reached, and so we organised public meetings to make all of the final decisions.

Despite my attempt to remain outside the decision-making process, my very public position in these very sensitive public meetings caused some serious consternation amongst locals who did not know me well. The chairman of the committee actually had to actively bring the issue up with some of his friends and neighbours to allay their concerns about me—a kind of political damage-control. One particularly successful local businessman even confronted me in the pub one day shortly after this meeting and verbally abused me for "getting too involved". I had become a "meddling blow-in". Some of my friends told me not to worry about this confrontation (and the rumours), but others warned me that I had 'crossed the line'. Interestingly, my local friends were the ones who told me not to worry (and even found it amusing), while my blow-in friends were the ones who scolded me for getting too involved.

Once again, Frankenberg's observations about incomer involvement in local politics is comparable. He described how 'strangers' were commonly 'allowed' to occupy very public positions in committee meeting so that locals, whose relationships with each other were complex and sensitive, could avoid the appearance of making controversial proposals and decisions (1957:18-19). My case was different in that almost the entire Development Plan committee was made up of locals. The locals were not using me as a shield against public

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<sup>4</sup> The goal in anthropology is no longer to feign some sort of 'scientific objectivity' because we now fully recognise the influence of the researcher on relationships in the field and on subsequent interpretations; instead, it is more realistic to achieve high quality intersubjective relations coupled with solid data collection to attempt to minimise biases in our representations.

opinion, but my presence as an incomer on such an important committee became controversial.

Locals can afford to find blow-ins' gaffs amusing, but blow-ins have to be careful. For the blow-in, a social misstep can be extremely damaging. Their mutual biography with the local community is incomplete, extending only back to the moment that they arrived. As Schuetz put it, "Seen from the point of view of the approached group, [the stranger] is a man without a history" (1944:501). Local biographies on the other hand may literally be intertwined for generations. It is a given that inter-biographical, or consociate, relations (Schutz 1970:170) carry a great deal of weight.

The blow-in has a temporally limited inter-biographical reputation to rely on, and for that reason, it is much more tenuous. What's more, the local's reputation, too, might be reduced by inappropriate behaviour, they might be the focus of negative gossip, or they might even be ostracised by other residents if they've caused a serious breach, but their claim to belonging—in other words, their claim to *being a local*—would remain unquestioned. In other words, the local is sometimes excused more quickly because they were, are, and will continue to be, locals. Their 'rootedness' implies that local consociate relationships with that

individual or at least with their family will continue indefinitely. The blow-in never had a claim to belong in this way. The loss of one's reputation and/or one's friends through ostracism, would be much more damaging and more difficult to mend.

This is hypothetically true for all incomers because of the dissimilar value placed on their status in relation to a local's status. However, the dissimilarity is not because simply 'being a local' means that one will automatically have more

**Doolin  
Community**

**Public meeting**  
To draw up submissions to  
The  
**Clare Co. Council**  
**North Clare Area  
Development Plan**  
**At the Russell Cultural  
Centre**  
**Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup> 9-30pm.**

Many topics for discussion including, Lighting and footpath for the villages, sewage extension to Garrihy's cross, design and types of development for Doolin, developing the pier and surrounding area, green areas and limits to the size of villages. Discussion on areas of Doolin, Fisherstreet, Roadford, Glasha, Ballyvara/Baileasallagh, Camaunc, Lough etc.

We ask you to attend the data display of plans and proposals of the Council concerning the North Clare Development Plan at the Ritz Lisdoon on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> of May 3pm to 9pm. If you attend please register your name and address as from Doolin as you enter, it may give Doolin Community more of a say in its future development.

**Figure 6.3:** The poster advertising the public meeting

influence or because one's day-to-day relationships are somehow any better; rather, it emerges from the very permanence of that status. It is important then to clarify that blow-ins with a longer inter-biographical consociate relationship with locals are also regarded more carefully than 'new' blow-ins. In other words, the longer an incomer has lived in the locale, building a reputation through daily life-world interactions (Jackson 1996:8), the more seriously they are taken. Hard and fast distinctions are not made immediately between locals and incomers when controversies erupt. As one journalist insisted, differences between locals and incomers in Ireland cannot be divided "neatly into good guys and bad guys" (O'Regan 2002), no matter which 'side' one would characterise as wearing the white hats. I would simply argue that locals are by default more permanently interrelated with others in the village (of course quite literally), whereas blow-ins' relationships are less permanent, and what's more, always have the potential, however slight, of ending.

Unfortunately, tensions between incomers and locals in Ireland (as anywhere really) can degenerate into more overt intolerance. I never ran into situations where the strain between locals and blow-ins grew to levels that were overtly discriminatory<sup>5</sup>. In fact, despite the exposition of the tensions and limitations to inclusion outlined in this chapter, Doolin and northwest Clare in general are known to be extremely welcoming places for blow-ins. However, it is clear from national newspapers and online sources that elsewhere tension can escalate well beyond mild ostracism and verbal abuse to blatant intolerance. For the first time in Irish history, mass immigration has replaced mass emigration, and it is estimated that there are people from almost 160 different nationalities currently living in Ireland ("Varieties of Irishness"). Some of them are economic migrants, some are asylum seekers, and others are simply hoping to make a home in Ireland. Immigrant-cum-blow-ins, while sincerely welcomed in many cases, have also run into the predictable xenophobia that arises in such situations. A letter to the editor in *The Irish Times*, dated 20 September 1994 entitled "Imbalance in West Cork" bemoans the "extraordinary" increase of "non-nationals who are now resident in West Cork" which has led to "an alarming imbalance... reach[ing] frightening proportions" (Ní Chonaill 1994). The xenophobic rhetoric is undisguised. In North Leitrim, a German couple were recently "terrorised" by locals who were "trying to drive them away" (Managh

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<sup>5</sup> The local population is in fact extremely intolerant of intolerance. One blow-in, a black man, is beloved in the community, and for example, when two drunken tourists began hurling racial slurs at him one evening, he gladly helped the barmen throw them out on their ears minutes after their racial abuse began. They were told in no uncertain terms that they were not welcome in Doolin again. It was a story that was proudly told for weeks. This acceptance and defence of 'difference' extends to the arena of sexual orientation and religious affiliation as well. I would argue that this is largely a result of Doolin's long historical encounter with bohemianism: the antics of the Macnamara family in the auld days, and the wild invasion of hippys, revivalists, and 'good-lifers' since the 1960s.



2002:3). In cases where the blow-in population is made up of non-white incomers, intolerance can become couched in racism. A Dublin blow-in of African descent told a reporter, "Black immigrants simply stand out more... and many Irish people aren't too fussy about their insults" (cited by Cullen 2002:7).

These cases may be the outlying extremes, but they are indicative of a serious problem that is beginning to emerge for modern Ireland. In relation to this growing issue, the authors of a 1998 survey of 'rural dwellers' in Ireland were able to show that there is a growing sense of cultural isolation for some Irish farmers due to the increase of incomers (Monk 1998). The authors suggest that the cause of this cultural isolation is due to the "lack of reciprocity or of similarity between the farmer and members of the [changing] local community" (*ibid.*). Basic cultural differences then can exacerbate these tensions.

I recall a young Irish blow-in friend of mine pointing out the physical separation between blow-ins and locals one night in the pub. We looked across the room, and sure enough, there was a distinct 'set' of blow-ins gathered together 'having the craic', and nearby, clustered around on barstools, a fairly distinct 'set' of locals. He also mentioned how locals tend to socialise in the pubs on weekends, whereas blow-ins can be found in the pub most nights whether they're drinking or not. It's by no means a fixed pattern, but the arrangement he described is fairly consistent, and it's something I noted for the rest of my time in Doolin. This may be due to the fact that the pubs become the centre of the social universe for, especially, 'new' blow-ins who do not have access to, or the cultural knowledge about, the more intimate social rituals of 'visiting' one's neighbours, who do not have young children, and who do not have heavy daily work such as tending B&Bs or farms.

It would be useful to elaborate on the differences between certain 'kinds' of blow-ins which may contribute to varying definitions. First, Irish blow-ins have something of an obvious advantage over international blow-ins because they were raised in a relatively similar "cultural pattern" (Schuetz 1944:499), although it is also worth reiterating the fact that even Irish blow-ins are still blow-ins and can never become local. Generally though, the cultural overlap is near complete for Irish blow-ins who at the least share a complex national and social history. Nearly everything about life in Ireland can be 'foreign' to the international blow-in from the food, the weather to sporting events and how to tick one's head to the side to say a silent 'hello'. In other ways, especially when it comes to entering the local economy, politics and kinship systems, Irish blow-ins are treated similarly to international blow-ins.

A second useful distinction is between blow-ins who have lived in the area for some time and 'new' blow-ins who have only lived in the area for a few years,



although 'new' blow-ins are not given a specific nomenclature. Often, new blow-ins do not spend great amounts of energy 'giving much back' to the community, choosing to stay well out of the political and social affairs of their local or blow-in neighbours. In some cases, this is dependent on their personality or their motivations for living in the village. Again, Ennew made a similar distinction between 'old' and 'new' incomers in the Scottish island of Lewis (1980:117). Like in Lewis, the 'new' incomers in Doolin tend to be younger and more able to come and go as they please. Also like Lewis, many of these new incomers in Doolin are "attempting to retreat from 'pressures' of modern urban existence" (*ibid.*)<sup>6</sup>. Some are on a larger project of exploring the world before eventually returning home. Sara arrived in Doolin around the same time that we did and she told me,

I always wanted to go travelling, but I never got my ass into gear... I just got my money together and a ticket and just came over here. No plans, nothing. Just take each day as it comes.

I asked her why she chose to come to Ireland. She explained,

I think it was more because my brothers were over here [in Dublin] and it was about time—it was about time to go travelling... That would be the main reason.

The first place I wanted to go travelling was Africa, first. Yeah, I was all into Africa. I didn't really know all that much about Ireland when I first came over here so I didn't know what to expect or anything like that.

Then, I asked her why she came out west to Doolin. She told me,

I've always been brought up in small little towns. I find that when you're living in a city, you don't really—you don't really experience or learn about Ireland 'cause it's just so international—or a multicultural place, in Dublin. And I'm here to travel in Ireland and not a big city. You don't really meet the Irish. It's good to meet different people from all different countries, but I'm here to learn about Ireland and um—.

I was actually going down to Dingle, but I got the job at [the pub], and I decided to stay here. It's a lot more nice. It's a lot more laid back. And you get to meet people that grew up here since they were little. And it's good to listen to the stories of how the place has changed and what it was actually like to live here.

In some ways, Sara is typical of these younger incomers whose first intention is to travel. Staying for a long period in one place is not unexpected,

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<sup>6</sup> Part of the lyrics to song written by a blow-in express the romantic hold the place has on some travellers even after they've returned home: "I often thought of Doolin when lying on my bed/And I pictured in my mind the life I could have had./That's why I'm going back now, for it's a special place./Worries I won't have at all and I'll see better days./Back to Doolin/Back to Doolin/I wished I had never gone away." (Holland 2003).

but it is also typically meant to be temporary. In fact, despite the fact that Sara stayed for nearly a year, she described herself as a 'traveller', definitely not a tourist but also not an incomer or a 'blow-in'. Other researchers on tourists have noted this distinction and have argued that these 'long-haul' travellers "see tourists as people who go on holiday in hotels where they are separated from the 'real' locals. 'Collecting'... new experiences... means going to places which are not organised for tourists but for locals" (DesForges 1998:181). In that sense, Sara places herself in between a working-tourist and a blow-in on an amalgamated, fluid continuum. Interestingly, despite the semi-transient and carefree nature of some of these younger incomers, many of the older, permanent blow-ins told me this serendipitous wandering was exactly how they were first introduced to the community. Sara eventually left (in fact, we gave her a lift when we returned to England before she flew home), but sometimes, these travellers stay or return. The level of involvement that incomers like Sara achieve is far less in-depth than a long-time resident blow-in who might marry into the community, start a business and get involved in local committees.

Some new blow-ins don't care a great deal about local affairs. They have chosen to live in Doolin and commit to it to a certain extent, but tend to, for example, spend most of their time with other blow-ins. Getting involved with the political life of the village is seen as meaningless by some unless it directly concerns them, which it rarely would. Many young blow-ins, like Sara, rent accommodation and work in the service industry. They have no long-term capital investment in the locale and can live a life fairly unencumbered by 'typical' responsibilities, nine-to-five workdays, and monthly bills. The complexities of local kinship and social relations do not need to be learned in detail in order to have a cohesive social group of friends, especially amongst other like-minded blow-ins.

For some, the "normative communitas" (Turner 1992:44) experienced amongst blow-ins provides enough of a sense of belonging, and the vicarious relationships they make with locals are fine but are not necessarily sought out. Some incomers primarily confine their relationships to co-workers, other blow-ins and a few others. In this sense, Doolin is similar to the large populations of incomers in other touristed contexts. In Mallorca, Waldren observed that outsiders "tend to be drawn into foreign groupings rather than being absorbed as individuals into local activities" (1996:151). This is especially true for new blow-ins who have fewer relationships. Also, longer-term blow-ins, again similar to the Mallorcan context, sometimes "see themselves more closely aligned to [the locals] than with the foreigners who have come to the village" more recently (*ibid.*).

As a new blow-in myself, I recall situations where I felt more comfortable amongst other recent blow-ins than in the company of locals. For example, I remember trying to engage a few local friends in conversation one day at the pub. I felt that my attempts at conversation were falling flat. Even though I usually enjoyed the company of these locals whom I consider my friends, that day I simply wasn't in the mood for the traditional teasing banter. In the corner, I spied a few of my blow-in friends, non-Irish co-workers who'd arrived in Doolin shortly after we did, and I went to talk with them instead. I wrote this about it in my fieldnotes that night:

Recent blow-ins often find social comfort in the company of other recent blow-ins. One's experience is very similar since you were all 'introduced' to the culture of Doolin at the same time. You go through the same events together. You even see this with older, well-established blow-ins... I was leaning on this crutch now.

Again, this strong bond with other blow-ins is especially true for some younger incomers who never develop economic or kin ties in the locale. A confrontation with a new cultural pattern, i.e., Irish culture in general and the local culture of Doolin, means that international blow-ins often find solace in each others' company because each new incomer is facing a similar confrontation. Schuetz wrote that the stranger who confronts a new culture,

has, first of all, to use the term of W. I. Thomas, to *define* the situation. Therefore, he cannot stop at approximate acquaintance with the new pattern, trusting in his vague knowledge *about* its general style and structure but needs explicit knowledge *of* its elements, inquiring not only into their *that* but into their *why*" (1944:506, italics in original).

So, new blow-ins from South Africa, America, or England, despite the internationality of their own interactions, find each others' company refreshing because they often discuss the *why* of this new, Irish, cultural pattern that surrounds them. Jokes are told about the Irish and their ways. Longer-term blow-ins provide explanations to newer, less acquainted blow-ins about Irish rules of behaviour and habits. Schuetz goes on to say that

the cultural pattern of the approached group is to the stranger not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of investigation, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master" (*ibid.*).

Blow-ins find shelter in their shared discovery-adventure.

Most of these 'new' blow-ins do not stay in the area indefinitely. They eventually move on to other areas and seek other opportunities after a few years, when they feel that they've 'exhausted' places like Doolin. Single blow-ins who do not 'marry into the village' but stay for a lifetime are not unknown but are relatively rare. The quietude of the wintertime, with its lack of employment and tourists, is often cited as the major factor in their 'exhaustion', but certainly, the failure to develop more extensive relationships might also play a part. The intense 'romance' of the place wears off as it become familiar (or as it changes), and the party atmosphere of the rowdy summer tourist season is no longer enough to sustain them. Comments like "I can't take another winter in Doolin" are common, and are again, comparable to other contexts (Ennew 1980:117).

'New' blow-ins often come to recognise the limitations of their blow-in status after a given period in the locale, and sometimes become cynical, leading them to conclude that there is something like an apartheid system at work between blow-ins and locals. I disagree with this characterisation, first and foremost, because it is a separation created by both parties if and when it occurs. One's status as a new blow-in or a local may limit one's interactions to be sure. However, there are plenty of cases where full-on locals are very much excluded from most social circles because of some form of poor social behaviour while many blow-ins, even relative newcomers, integrate well into village social life. Meaningful relationships in any situation can be difficult to establish and preserve. For some blow-ins the effort isn't worth it for whatever reason. Consequently, they can come to feel somewhat excluded. A person's status as a 'local' or a 'blow-in' is brought to the fore in these instances, but it is not the primary cause of them. Like all forms of identification, they are accentuated and used to provide explanations of particular behaviour in particular scenarios.

In other cases, even for some long-term blow-ins, getting involved too much in community affairs is the antithesis for why they like living in Doolin, and at worst, it can be 'dangerous'. Doolin is seen by some blow-ins as a place in which to escape the modern world of capitalism, politics, bureaucracy, and complex technology. It is a place where one can live a quiet, private life. For these Doolinites, 'getting involved' too much gets in the way of their ability to live the 'good life'. But even in the case of these blow-ins, some involvement in the social life of the community is desirable, and in order to maintain any social relations, some form of social reciprocity is required in order to nurture a healthy reputation amongst one's neighbours and co-workers.

Blow-ins' attempts to garner relationships with locals are sometimes thwarted for any number of reasons. Sometimes, 'long-haul', travelling blow-ins who have 'landed' in Doolin for an extended period (up to several years

sometimes) not only do not care to integrate, but locals find their behaviour strange and outlandish. These blow-ins, who are occasionally called 'hippies' in Doolin, sometimes have a style of dress and hair that is both distinctive and individualistic. The novelist Edna O'Brien stereotyped this blow-in 'look': "They laughed, both knowing how the local people viewed them, with their long skirts and their Wellingtons, their sloppy knitwear and their ethnic jewellery. 'Blow ins' they were called" (2003:52). This is a stereotype however and outward appearances are in and of themselves not a marker of distinction since many Irish residents in Doolin, young and old, also consider themselves 'something of a hippy.' The difference that locals find perplexing and often earns these incomers the moniker of 'hippy' is clearly behavioural: a general lack of conforming to local norms of social interaction, and a resistance to bend to gossip or other forms of social pressure. Since these incomers are sometimes rather inflexible about their own views of local behaviour, sometimes viewing the locals as conservative beyond reason, the social divisions between them and locals is rather mutual. The meeting of one inflexibility with another causes social partitioning.

Conversely, if a new incomer 'tries too hard' to enter into the community too quickly after arriving, people get suspicious as well. Zealousness can be perceived as an imposition or as insincerity. Similarly, if a new incomer is perceived to make conscious attempts to use the local dialect (in terms of accent or vocabulary), they can be seen as insincere. Either these new blow-ins are reigned in by social pressure and gossip, or they become disappointed with their failed attempts to integrate and leave.

For still others, an intense level of involvement can be forced upon them through marriage. Marrying a local quickly plunges one into the social intricacies of village life. Suddenly, one is related to a significant body of local kin. Marriage to a local is, by implication, marriage to the locale. One's level of involvement and responsibility, although it will always remain at the level of a blow-in, is immediate and potent. Interestingly, it is more common for women blow-ins to marry local men, not the other way around. Local men sometimes flirt ostentatiously with female tourists which in some circumstances leads to short-term relationships, or more rarely, longer-term relationships and even marriage<sup>7</sup>. Marriage obviously implies a deeper level of commitment, and even if one enters a union as an inflexible 'hippy' type or as someone who attempts to integrate too quickly, the relationship(s) created through the marriage would presumably carry the individual through into more permanent territory, whereas unmarried blow-

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<sup>7</sup> In a study analysing the effects of tourism on family life in Crete, Kousis makes brief mention of how local men often dated female tourists which they euphemistically talked about as 'harpooning' or 'fishing' foreign women (1989:329). The local men in Doolin who 'chase' female tourists also called it "fishing". This issue of local men and foreign women has also been covered in a Turkish touristed destination (Tucker 1999).

ins have nothing to 'force' them to learn to cope with local norms through compromise.

## V.

### Conclusions

Blow-ins are included in local life, but do not find the path to inclusion free of stumbling blocks and occasional resistance. In this chapter I have detailed some of the means by which blow-ins come to belong. Some of these ways and means are structural. Incomers have made significant contributions to the local economy, some have married into the local kin groups, and politically, many incomers are actively involved in local committees. For the most part, there is a correlation between the length of an incomer's residence in the locale and the level of an incomer's involvement into these structural domains, but not necessarily. Some long-term incomers have not got involved in local economics, politics or kinship, and some 'new' blow-ins enter into these realms quickly especially through marriage or business investments.

Integration however, is not simply due to involvements into these structural domains. Rather, inclusion into the local culture has at least as much to do with, as Schuetz put it, the success of an incomers' "attempt to interpret the cultural pattern of a social group which he approaches and attempts to orient himself within" (1944:499). This has less to do with an incomers structural involvement in various village domains than it does with building long-term consociate relations through daily praxis in the social world of the village. So, on the one hand, while this chapter details a particular aspect of a particular classificatory system, on the other, it is about how individuals manoeuvre between categories, manoeuvres which are negotiated, contested, stymied, and pushed beyond precedents.

For the blow-in, there are natural limits to inclusion into the structural social world of the village: the economy, village politics, and despite the ability to marry-in, even the kinship systems. The blow-in spouse of a local will always remain a blow-in, and by some standards, their children will be at most, half-local/half blow-in. Economically, blow-ins have been very successful in the village, but there are limitations to their involvement in local economics as well. The success of economic ventures run and operated by blow-ins in Doolin are almost solely within the tourist-oriented economy. Farming, while I grant that it is apparently less attractive for outsiders, is also presumably much more difficult to enter into. Land and property in general, falling under the philosophy of the 'limited good', is not easily acquired by outsiders. Finally, while blow-ins are very

much involved in local politics, incomers are not given the kind of authority that locals are granted, and are carefully reigned in through various types of social pressures if they overstep their bounds.

I would argue that a blow-in's successful entrance into these various structural domains in the village are largely dependent on their more subtle inclusion into the local 'culture'. The international blow-in, raised elsewhere and equipped with a different "cultural pattern" (Schuetz 1944:499), must move beyond simply "interpret[ing] his new social environment in terms of his *thinking as usual*... which will necessarily prove inadequate" (*ibid.*:502, my italics) to adopting the "new cultural pattern... as the scheme of his own expression" (*ibid.*:504). Even the Irish blow-in must learn a new way of "thinking as usual", however slight the difference. Most importantly, an incomer must enter into long-term consociate relations in the village, build a reputation and maintain it through day-to-day action in order to be included in any meaningful way into the lifeworld of the village.

In chapter 8, we will take a look at the ways in which incomers have entered the musical domain. I argue that this domain of activity differs significantly from the other ways and means of inclusion, and that as a result of this difference, inclusion can be total. Indeed, blow-ins have all but appropriated the local music scene in Doolin. But first, in the following chapter, we need to look at the important ways in which the music has become consolidated and commercialised.



## Chapter Seven—The Consolidation of the Music

He used to kick off the session in the pub, and he'd be tuning up the fiddle around the corner here, and—

he'd be tuning up and he'd say—

he might say to me—he'd say, "*Open the cash register, Peter!*" And I'd open the register. And when you opened the register a little *bell* would ring.

And he says, "Tonight now, Peter, we won't be tuning up to C#", he says, "We'll be tuning up to the *register!*"

—Peter Curtin

[I]t is inherently no more reasonable to adopt the new than cleave to the old. What is stupid is doing anything without awareness.

—Henry Glassie (1995[1982]:491)

### I.

#### Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have described the sometimes dramatic historical development of various aspects of social life in northwest Clare. That historical trajectory has led to the accumulating robusticity and consolidation of social institutions. For example, the general economic prosperity of the Celtic Tiger has enriched the lives of some, the relatively new tourist economy has brought a flood of money and people into northwest Clare, which has further led to a massive build-up of tourist-related infrastructure in the region, and traditional music has been 'revived' and in various ways institutionalised. This chapter takes a closer look at the ways in which the music itself has become consolidated (Bohlman 1988:133), and in particular, how an emergent structure of local and global institutions and socio-economic relationships have come to surround performances in Doolin.

As Feld points out (2001:190), globalisation in general and the globalisation of music in particular are parallel processes which occur at the local, national and international levels. However, they are not always manifested in the same ways. Certain institutions or relationships are more important at a national level than locally. Institutions like *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* and the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO) have become more influential nationally and internationally than locally. Likewise, other developments have arisen out of the specific situation in Doolin. For example, its own burgeoning tourist industry has had greater effect locally than other influences. Paying musicians to 'seed'

sessions (which, granted, is a national trend) has created many specifically local and regional interdependencies between musicians and publicans. Likewise, the influx of mass tourists every summer creates a very local need for amplification, and has provided an environment in which traditional Irish music 'bands' can flourish. In this chapter, these issues are explored in detail.

The ossifying institutional developments that surround the performance and consumption of the music in this context naturally lead to a discussion about the 'commodification' of cultural 'artefacts' and their consumption. Therefore, in this chapter I also present a critique of the concepts of commodification, commercialisation and authenticity in the tourism literature and ethnomusicology in relation to the ethnographic material presented in this thesis.

## II.

### **The Traditional Music of the Celtic Tiger**

As I have stated before, the Celtic Tiger refers to an economic phenomenon. But since one of the major features of the period following the Revival of Irish music is the music's increasing commercialisation and consumption by tourist audiences, it is appropriate to extend this economic label to the music, and indeed, to other aspects of Irish social life in the 1990s. Commercialism and modernisation take many forms. In relation to traditional Irish music, commercial and institutional influences include the huge, worldwide spectacle called *Riverdance*, the explosion of local festivals, the already extant institutionalisation of the music by CCE and IMRO, and recent 'intellectualisation' by academics. These changes have been so dramatic that some writers have even gone so far as to make a distinction between traditional Irish music and "new traditional' Irish music" (Quinn 1996:386).

#### ***Riverdance***

The same year that Allen argued that the Celtic Tiger was "baptised", 1994, (2000:9) a 'Celtic spectacle' was also born. During an intermission in the Eurovision Song Contest, a short Irish Dance piece called *Riverdance* was performed (Cinnéide 1996:148). Bill Whelan arranged the music for the piece and Michael Flatley and Jean Butler choreographed the step dancing (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:149). The performance went over extremely well, (and the Irish went on to win the Song Contest for a third year in a row) (Cinnéide 1996:148). Since then, the phenomenal popularity of the performance led its creators to produce numerous full-scale theatrical shows to worldwide popular acclaim (*ibid.*:150). Part of the success of the shows is its combination of dance,

music, visual spectacle, and thematic theatricality (*ibid.*). It speaks to a very wide audience, and it is intended to do so. The shows have travelled the world over and made its creators unexpected amounts of money. At the height of its popularity, multiple production companies travelled to different parts of the world and played in arenas that could hold audiences of up to 6,000 people at once (McCaughren 2003:13).

Since the advent of music and dance competitions, the music and the dance, which were at one time inseparable parts of a larger whole, have become separated (O'Connor 1998:58). As I argued before, the Revival contributed greatly to this separation. Competition and separation sped up the tempo of both the music and the dance and led to an emphasis on individual virtuosity. O'Connor has argued that *Riverdance* has taken this process "full circle, from a situation in which musicians played for dancers, through an era in which musicians played primarily as individual and virtuoso performers, to a situation where the dancing in spectacles like *Riverdance* is at a much faster pace than either the local or national competitive performance situations" (*ibid.*).

Casey has painted a broader picture of the appeal of *Riverdance*. She has argued that *Riverdance* tapped into a growing love of 'Irishness' in the 1990's in the United States in particular (2002:13) which helped launch its success. In the 2000 U.S. census, 39 million U.S. citizens declared that they were "Irish-American", and according to Casey, this identification has increasingly become a point of pride (*ibid.*:16) associated with a romantic vision of, and nostalgia for, so-called "folk" cultures (*ibid.*:19). Irish music, she argues, is "a means of connecting with the past, the authentic and the folk and, for many Americans, this is a fetish that requires little encouragement. The consumption of dance by paying audience members and buyers of compact discs and videos must be considered an extension of this presumed access to and desire for authentic folk culture" (*ibid.*:23). I would suggest, and I am not alone in doing so (cf. Sommers Smith 2001:124), that spectacles like *Riverdance* which tapped into this growing nostalgia for some form of supposedly 'authentic' folk culture are a starting point for many individuals who then become tourists attempting to seek out the 'real deal' in Ireland itself or even go on to learn how to play traditional Irish music.

In the past few years however, like many things Irish, *Riverdance* has begun a process of downsizing its productions (McCaughren 2003:13). Regardless, there's no doubt that the *Riverdance* phenomenon has left its mark on Irish music and dance.

### CCE, Competitions and Festivals

In addition to helping prompt the Revival of traditional Irish music, *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* has subsequently had a great deal to do with its globalisation and institutionalisation. It must be said that CCE has only an indirect effect on much of the musical life of northwest Clare, but its indirect effects have been influential and cannot be underestimated. There has been a concentration of power in CCE since its inception by means of evaluating what 'good' traditional Irish music is through its system of competition adjudication (Henry 1989:91, and see chapter 3), and more recently, by even declaring what is or is not a traditional instrument (Commings 2004a). CCE has for some time paid a staff of full-time administrators, and the daily operations of the institution are funded by government grants and membership dues (Henry 1989:74). It is, essentially, a bureaucratic body with a constitutional remit to "promote Irish traditional music in all forms<sup>1</sup>" and "to establish branches throughout the country and abroad" (*ibid.*:69). In this, CCE has been extremely successful over the past fifty years if one considers that branches now thrive in places as far flung as California and Japan. Now, in no small part due to the activities of CCE, people of very diverse back grounds are committing themselves to learning this music (Fairbairn 1994:597).

CCE also began holding classes in vocational schools as early as the 1960s (McCarthy 1999:162). They were by no means the only institution that have provided formal education in traditional music (*ibid.*:166), but according to McCarthy they have been "the single most important agent and patron in [its] transmission" (*ibid.*:167). McCarthy also points out that, as educational programs and locally sponsored sessions, workshops and festival expanded over the years, "[t]eacher qualification was seen as an important safeguard for ensuring authentic transmission of the music to the students and for establishing standards in the teaching of traditional music" (*ibid.*:168). By 1980, CCE and the Department of Education had implemented a diploma program to that end (*ibid.*). On the one hand, it could be argued that these formalising developments pushed traditional music in the direction of classical musics, but on the other hand, it allowed for some of the traditional teaching styles (such as the utilisation of the session context itself) with Irish music to be included into that formal education (*ibid.*:179).

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<sup>1</sup> I find this interesting and paradoxical in light of the recent public declarations by the current CCE chief, Seamus Duffy, that guitar and bodhran players are 'destroying' traditional Irish music (Commings 2004a). The debate that his comments have spurred reveal the partial disconnection of CCE from the performance standards of traditional music as it is played *in situ* outside of the CCE competitions. Some musicians have agreed with Duffy's comments, but many more have responded with vitriol (Commings 2004b).

Fame and 'professional credentials' are now bestowed upon the winners who often go on to use this symbolic capital to join touring companies like *Riverdance*, or to jump-start a recording career (Larson Sky 1997:114). What this means is that there is now a powerful economic incentive (not to mention the fame involved) for younger musicians especially to become professional virtuosos.

As I pointed out in chapter 3, developments like these have been unsurprisingly controversial. While recognising the important role that CCE has played in ensuring the survival and promotion of traditional music, musicians that I know are more often disparaging than complementary about its activities. In other communities where CCE has had a greater impact, I would venture a guess that opinions are more sympathetic.

The CCE annual *Fleadh* has a history going back fifty years, and there are other annual festivals that have some history as well. One example is the *Fleadh Nua*, originally begun by CCE in 1970 which is now held in Ennis in County Clare every year ("Fleadh Nua: The Concept"). The Willy Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay is another example, independently organised by locals back in 1973. Harry Hughes, a local man who knew the renowned uilleann piper Willy Clancy told me that he and the other organisers originally thought about erecting a monument in his memory after Mr. Clancy's death, but decided that a greater impact could be made by teaching students of Irish music, thereby helping to ensure the survival of the tradition. The school started out very small, but has grown to international status. The town explodes with visiting musicians from all over the globe for what is colloquially known as 'Willy Week'.

However, today, there are so many new traditional music festivals in Ireland that, in the summer months at least, one could easily go a festival every weekend. Often, these annual festivals have been initiated to honour the memory of a local musician who passed away.

As I described earlier, there is an inherent tension in these festivals between economic and musical motivations. It takes a lot of resources to run festivals even if they are weekend affairs, and festival committees regularly turn to corporate sponsorship in order to fund them. The formal concerts can be expensive, especially if the musicians and



**Figure 7.1:** Playing on the street during 'Willy Week'

groups hired are well-known and travel a concert circuit regularly. Sometimes, musicians must be hired to teach courses. All of these events must be advertised to bring in the crowds, and it all costs money. The Micho Russell Festival was sponsored by Smithwick's, an Irish beer brand, in 2003. Smithwick's posters and banners adorned all of the pubs, and pubs which normally don't serve the beer put in Smithwick's taps for the event. The Smithwick's logo adorned all of the event's literature. This kind of corporate sponsorship and 'piggyback' advertisement is typical.

### **The Incursion of Copyright Law**

Tensions between traditional Irish music-making and profit-making are not just social tensions. They have recently expanded into the arena of copyright law and thus have become political and legal tensions. "Copyright" is defined as "the right granted by law to the creators of original literary, dramatic, artistic and musical works to ensure that copyright owners are rewarded for the exploitation of their works." (McGinley 2003:30). 'Ownership' in this sense can be held by an individual or a record company for lengthy periods, spanning decades, before they enter into the 'public domain' (*ibid.*). Recent incursions of this industry-generated view of musical 'rights' are attempting to include traditional Irish music, which was once considered to *already be* in the 'public domain'. The growth of recordings of traditional Irish music creates an extremely complex negotiation between two understandings of ownership. The first is that traditional music, by definition, is not owned by individuals but by the public. The second, more modern notion is that an individual's *arrangement* of particular tunes or sets can now be 'individually owned'.

All of this has now entered into a highly bureaucratic domain. In 1999, after a long period of antagonism, the Irish Music Rights Organisation, a non-profit organisation whose remit it is to "collect and distribute royalties arising from the public performance of copyright works" ("Mission Statement" 2003:1), reached a contractual agreement with CCE which stated that "traditional music in its original form" was "copyright free" (as cited in McCann 2002:70). This is a slippery phraseology though, and according to some commentators, incursions like these by the music industry into the domain of traditional Irish music are reminiscent of the kind of suppressive control that the Dance Halls Act had on the Country House Dances in the auld days (Laffey 1998/1999). Vallely has argued that the Irish Music Rights Organisation has "adopted a commodity approach without consultation" with musicians within its own ranks or within the ranks of CCE (2000). This is not just bureaucratised 'legalese' though. IMRO in particular, despite their agreement with CCE, has begun to seek royalties from



publicans who host live sessions in which, according to IMRO, copyrighted arrangements are being played (McCann 2002:i, 76). Of course, this has been met with antagonism and incredulity (*ibid.*:76-82).

The incursion of copyright on traditional Irish music is an extremely complex issue which has been dealt with in great detail recently by McCann (2002), and since it is a topic that is beyond the primary scope of the present thesis, I would refer to his interesting work on the subject for further discussions. However, to say the least, individual ownership is a radical, modernising shift in meaning. It is an attempt to literally 'commodify' this music. Individual musicians or record companies would theoretically own the 'legal rights' to a tune or a set of tunes if they indicate that it is a 'traditional arrangement' ("trad. arr."), thereby taking what was once a public resource and making it an individual's intellectual property. This is extremely ironic given the supposedly 'publically owned' nature of folk traditions such as Irish dance music. In the present argument, it is another example, indeed an extreme one, of the consolidation of this music in the modern world.

### **The Internet and an Irish Music 'Public'**

Not all of the developments during the 1990s have been strictly commercial. An online traditional Irish music discussion group called IR-TRAD [[IRTRAD-L@LISTSERV.HEANET.IE](mailto:IRTRAD-L@LISTSERV.HEANET.IE)] was created by Hammy Hamilton (O Cuinn 1995). Today, it is host to hundreds of subscribers worldwide. The topics on the list include where to find particular recordings, particular tune notations (often in the popular 'ABC system' instead of classical musical notation which is harder to communicate on the Internet), the history of specific tunes, and fine-grained intellectual discussions about the meaning of various aspects of traditional music(s). IR-TRAD has created a new kind of musical 'community' in the broad sense (Sommers Smith 2001:122), a trans-national, trans-cultural 'public' that cuts through 'traditional' anthropological notions of 'community', but one that loosely "agree[s] on the form and content of the music and its social contexts" (*ibid.*). Sommers Smith suggests, and I would agree, that this is simply an expression of the new global popularity of traditional Irish music (*ibid.*:121).

Groups like IR-TRAD are an example of what Warner has called a 'public' (2002:49-50), which he describes as a self-organised (*ibid.*) collection of strangers with a common interest (*ibid.*:55)—or what Schutz would call a group of 'contemporaries' (1970:218)—who share a circulated, reflexive discourse (Warner 2002:62). The Internet is a perfect medium for the creation of such 'publics', but an 'Irish music public' also exists offline. For example, a magazine like *Irish Music* proclaims on each cover that it is "The Definitive Voice of Irish Music



Worldwide" and that it is "Your Guide to Irish Music in Ireland, Europe, Britain and North America". Although not as literally 'public' as an online chat group like IR-TRAD in that its content is edited, magazines like *Irish Music* provide a discursive 'voice' to a worldwide (albeit English-speaking) public of contemporaries.

### **Intellectualisation**

In the spring of 1996, the dramatic changes that had occurred over the past decades had accumulated to such an extent that a conference was held in Dublin to discuss their implications. The presenters and the audience were a mixture of musicians, scholars of music, academics, and members of the media. Some fit into multiple categories. The viewpoints about the music differed just as much. Larson Sky attended the conference and reports that it "fuelled passionate debate". McCann, who also attended, later wrote that the "general air was almost bloodthirsty" (2002:70). Larson Sky cites the program for the conference to highlight the concerns of the organisers:

Popular music's relentless economic values ransack the old music repertoire, while the new media focus public attention on a tiny number of 'stars.' Does all this devalue the notion of community in music? Is Traditional music part of any community life at all any more? Are we all doomed to become leprechauns to be poked at by tourists? Post colonial fodder to hungry First World intellectuals—and cameras? (cited in Larson Sky 1997:2-3)

Polemic viewpoints erupted at the conference which on the one hand highlighted the very different directions that traditional Irish music began to take after its revival. On the other hand, as the subtitle of the edited volume that came out of the conference suggests, the poles of opinion about Irish music have always been drawn between notions of "tradition and change". Others have made a parallel distinction between 'innovators' and 'purists' and suggest, rightly in my opinion, that the conflict between these 'camps' is nothing new, nor in fact anything to be all that remorseful about (Ahern 1999:17).

What interests me more than the polemic debate that erupted during and after the conference is the simple fact that it occurred at all. According to Hamilton and in my own experience, some traditional Irish musicians can be disdainful and suspicious of people (academics, musicians or anyone else) who attempt to "intellectualise about the music" (Hamilton 1999:82). The Crossroads Conference was by no means the first time anyone had done so. As I have pointed out previously in this thesis, folklorists have been 'collecting', and thereby intellectualising about, Irish music for well over a century. However, a

conference on this broad and public scale is something new entirely. Furthermore, "[t]his was not your usual conference... For perhaps the first time in history, a conference had been called at which practising musicians were in the majority" (McGann 2002:70). It signals a clear and growing self-conscious reflexivity and intellectualisation by the very practitioners of this music. Indeed, there is a deep irony in the conference program excerpt cited above in that its author worried about this process of intellectualisation while at the same time furthering its cause by organising the conference itself.

### III.

#### **The Commercialisation of Sessions in Doolin**

The larger changes that have occurred in Irish music during the Celtic Tiger era have of course affected the music in Doolin. However, the increasing institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of Irish music has not always had a direct effect on how it is performed, played, or understood locally. For example, the increasing influence of CCE, IMRO and the Internet have only had a peripheral and indirect effect locally in Doolin. *Riverdance* may have brought more tourists to Doolin, but again, I would argue that this is an indirect influence.

Specific, locally-oriented changes have been more influential during this same period. In 1994, the same year that witnessed the emergence of *Riverdance* and the "baptism" of the Celtic Tiger (Allen 2000:9), Doolin's Micho Russell was tragically killed in a car accident ("Musician's Death: Crash Driver Fined", 1994). Exactly when one wishes to mark the beginning of the end of the Revival or the emergence of the Celtic Tiger on a broader scale, 1994 will remain in the lived memories of Doolin people as "the end of an era"<sup>2</sup>. Other changes in the music had begun much earlier however. Many of the changes that I describe below result from two larger processes. The first process is something I call the 'rock-and-rollisation' of traditional Irish music. As I will describe shortly, this involves performative and musical changes, but also a change in meaning. The second process results from, not the music or its performance, but the relationships between the people who find themselves at the nexus between traditional music and the tourist industry. This change revolves around the complex issue of paying musicians to play in sessions. It concretises older relationships, creates new relationships, and leads to what I call the 'Triangle of Consumption'.

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<sup>2</sup> Again, I will leave the tributes to this local icon to those who knew him in life. I can only speak about the loss that the community feels in the years since Micho Russell's death. A constant refrain was "It's too bad you never met Micho". The gentle strength of the man's personality is present and palpable today in the area. Sadly, I have recently learned of the death of Gussie Russell, the third and last of the Russell brothers. He died almost exactly ten years after his brother Micho passed.

## **The Rock-and-Rollisation of Traditional Irish Music**

At the very height of the tourist season in the summertime, entering a pub in Doolin can be a bit of a task. When you pull the door open, a blast of noise, cigarette smoke<sup>3</sup> and body heat engulfs you and pulls you inside. Immediately, you have to push your way through the teeming crowds. On a weekend night especially, the locals will be gathered around in one section of the pub, furthest away from the music. In two of Doolin's three pubs, this gathering point for locals is nearest the main entrance, and it is this crowd that you have to squeeze through first. Sidling past the familiar faces, you nod your silent 'hellos' which are returned with a sideways tic of the head. You verbally greet your closer friends with a "How's things?" or "What's the craic?". Light chat inevitably ensues, although on a busy night, light chat must be shouted from one person to the other. If all else fails and there's "no news", work and weather are often the general topics for discussion. Off in the other room, tourists surround the session table, watching intently.

Kneafsey has noted this phenomenon in north county Mayo as well. There, she found that, in most people's opinions, visitors were much more interested in the music than locals (2003:31-32). Locals tend to hang around the bar while tourists tend to surround the music. But appearances can be deceiving. Elsewhere, Kneafsey has written that local appreciation of the music "is often rather understated, in the sense that local people appear to pay little attention to the music. Yet every so often you get a sense that they do appreciate it and understand it—particularly when someone sings and you get that intense sense of shared emotion" (2002:358). Two factors are involved. First, as they told me themselves, permanent residents in places like Doolin are 'spoiled' by the sheer amount of live music. Second, a deeper understanding creates a more distinctive appreciation for the higher quality, but rarer, performances. It wasn't so much that they weren't interested, they told me, as much as they were desensitised to all but the 'mightiest sessions', or to particular tunes or musicians that they liked. When one is 'spoiled', anything less can be ignored.

One must further delve into the heat and sweat, treading carefully so as not to spill one's pint, in order to get to the music—or at least in the vicinity of the music. On a particularly busy night, the tourists will have formed a tightly packed wall around the session, and you must carefully wait for an opportunity to find, and then defend, an opening, a window in the wall. Cameras flash, glasses clink and sometimes shatter on the floor, tourists talk in loud tones above the music, and the noise is punctuated by bouts of laughter.

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<sup>3</sup> The cigarette smoke may not exist anymore given the newly enacted smoking ban put into place in the spring of 2004. Obviously, as I stated in the introduction, the descriptions in this thesis are situated in time as well as in a place.



**Figure 7.2:** Singing into the 'hanging' microphones

squeeze into the space immediately surrounding the musicians' table. The answer to the problem is amplification. All three of Doolin's pubs have wired their session spaces for sound. The amplification takes two forms in Doolin's pubs. Two pubs, O'Connor's and McGann's, have a system whereby two microphones hang down by wires over the musicians' table about five feet off the floor. They are connected by a metal arm that swings out from the wall. The microphones are connected into a PA system that is controlled from behind the bar, and from there, the music is sent out to speakers positioned throughout the pub. The picture above shows a singer using one of these microphones in a very direct manner. Usually, when musicians are seated, huddled around the table, leaning forward into the music, these hanging microphones are relatively unnoticeable. This system allows the musicians to sit around the table in a circular formation as they would in any pub without microphones. Musicians can come and go. Visiting musicians can join in and be heard equally as well as anyone else. In other words, this system does not alter the way in which a session normally works.



**Figure 7.3:** Musicians using their own PA system

The physicality of the situation and the volume of noise causes a practical problem today (as it no doubt did even during the early Revival sessions): tourists have travelled great distances to hear a bit of this Irish music but can't all

The third pub in Doolin is different. At McDermott's, microphones are set up on stands which are placed in front of each musicians' instrument. Alternatively, some musicians have clip-on microphones that can be attached to the instrument and fed directly into the PA system. The PA is

controlled by the musicians themselves at McDermott's. This system of direct and individual amplification is a result of the space where the musicians sit. There is a small riser along one wall of the pub with three disconnected sets of railing in front of it which creates a natural kind of 'stage' for the musicians to sit on. Since this 'stage' area is in a linear formation, there is no table and the musicians do not sit in a circle. They sit side by side along a bench against the wall. The physical space lends itself to microphone stands and a linear concert-like physical orientation for the musicians. An interesting result is that it becomes, at the least, very difficult for visiting musicians to join the sessions there. A visiting musician would have to step up onto the 'stage' and then, to be heard above the amplified instruments, find their own microphone. When someone is invited up to play a few tunes, the other musicians are forced to step aside and let the visitor play a few sets or sing a song into the microphone they were just using. Well before the Revival, McDermott's was historically a place where Irish dance bands played music for locals to dance to, and in a sense the fact that the pub hires traditional Irish bands today to play there, is a continuation of that older pub tradition.

These amplificatory solutions allow tourists to choose whether or not they want to actually directly watch the session or simply listen to it where they can also find a place to sit and talk, even in another room where the music is piped in. On the other hand, it causes a change in the way the music is performed. Microphones, noticeable or not, also amplify the chat in between sets of tunes, an important social element of a session (see next chapter). In O'Connor's or McGann's where the microphones are less noticeable, musicians sometimes forget that the microphones are there and that their conversations in between sets of music can be heard all over the pub. Christy Barry told me how once, he began to complain about how there was "something wrong with my fucking flute" during a session. Another musician returned from the toilets and, having overheard him through the speakers, asked, "Hey Christy! What's fucking wrong with your fucking flute!?"

More tourists get to hear the music as a result of the amplification, but sometimes they are disappointed by it. The microphones are seen by some as a modern, 'polluting' influence. While necessary in Doolin in the summertime due to the large crowds, amplification does give some tourists the impression that the music has become 'commercialised'. In a survey, several tourists commented that they were disappointed either by the sheer amount of other tourists ("Too many people", "too noisy, nobody really paid attention to the musicians", "pubs very crowded"), or by the amplification in particular ("We like it a bit more 'acoustic', without the use of amplifiers and loudspeakers").

Musicians have differing opinions about the use of microphones and 'stages'. One musician told me that, at first, he didn't like the set up at McDermott's because it was sort of like a concert venue, but *not enough* like a concert venue. This came from a musician experienced at playing in both session settings and formal concert-halls. The problem, he told me, was that it felt *in between* a concert set up and a session space, and right away, he didn't know how to make use of the space. It took him a long while to get used to it. In pubs immediately outside of Doolin, amplification is rarely used if ever, even during the summertime. Of course, this impact is not lost on the permanent residents in the region. In other towns, the amplification of Doolin sessions is even cited as a marker of how 'commercial' and tourist-oriented Doolin has become. When I asked an Ennistymon publican to describe the differences between a session in his pub and Doolin sessions, he immediately responded, "*First of all, there's no amplification*".

Crucially, amplification is only used seasonally in Doolin because the one factor that dictates its usage is crowd noise. In the summer, the tourist crowds are too big and amplification is necessary. In that respect, it is a direct result of tourism. At O'Connor's Pub, since the microphones are fixed onto the wall in a large central room (what's often called the 'main bar'), amplified sessions are located there. Starting sometime in October though, amplification becomes unnecessary except on the weekends when lots of locals come out to socialise. Instead, the musicians hold sessions in what's often called the 'front room', which is in fact the oldest room in the pub. It's a lovely space with the original Doonagore Stone fireplace that was built by Packie Russell, and playing a tune there invokes the accumulation of Doolin's musical history. As I wrote in chapter 5, the pubs in northwest Clare *physically* revert to their pre-developmental context during the wintertime as their more recent expansions are closed off. So, the session reverts as well and returns to its older session space. The whole 'feel' of the session changes, transforming into a pre-tourist performance as well. In Doolin's other pubs, the amplification is also ended when the crowds diminish in the autumn, but the spaces don't change.

### **Group Playing and Musical Polyphony**

One result from the intensified interaction between sessions and tourism is a strictly musicological one. I play music but I am not classically trained in the technical aspects of music. I see the complex social relationships that have developed between tourism and the traditional Irish music as my anthropological remit and leave the technical intricacies of this music to those who know better. One of those who 'knows better' is Hazel Fairbairn who has analysed the



musicological effects of 'group playing' on traditional Irish music in great detail in her 1992 doctoral thesis and in an article published a year later. Conveniently, she utilises the sessions in Doolin as an example. She has shown that the music has in fact speeded up and that musicians use more ornamentation since the 1950s (1994:574). According to Fairbairn, these changes resulted from the influence of early recordings of Sligo musicians, whose style is faster and more ornamented, and from the initial separation of the music from the dancing (*ibid.*:577).

More importantly, she maintains that two later changes in the music were caused by the influx of visiting musicians and large audiences. Firstly, she has noted that sessions in Doolin tend to have a much stronger and much more consistent rhythm than in the other places she observed (1992:299). This, she contends, is a direct result of the long historical exposure to visiting musicians in sessions there (*ibid.*). Secondly, she argues that heterophonous playing is now reduced in Doolin in favour of a more standardised, group 'sound' (*ibid.*:306). Heterophony occurs when individual musicians simultaneously vary a single melody (Fairbairn 1994:587). This has an important repercussion. It shows that tourism and the influx of visiting musicians over many years have in fact changed the music at its core in a few small but not insignificant ways.

I am confident that seasonal variability in Doolin must also be at work though. In the depths of the winter, sessions are radically different than their summertime counterparts which I describe above. After the massive summertime crowds have dissipated and the village is predominantly left to its own devices, the music is played largely amongst close relations. The musicians and the audience all tend to know each other or at least know *of* each other. As a result, the interaction between the audience and the musicians is much more interactive and porous. The musicians feel far less constrained to 'perform' for the tourists (see below), and it is altogether a more intimate environment. I would contend that the musicians are freed from the constraints outlined by Fairbairn to some degree. It would be useful in future research for an ethnomusicologist to confirm or deny my claim. Regardless, the sound of a summer session and a winter session are radically different. (Compare track 7 to tracks 8-16).

### **Bands and Sessions, Performing and Playing**

Traditional Irish music 'bands' are one emergent adaptation to the general music industry of the modern world. Recording and selling records became an important avenue for making a living for traditional musicians during the Revival of Irish music. Bands like The Chieftains, Sweeney's Men, Planxty and the Bothy Band started this trend as early as the 1960s, and today, hundreds of 'bands'



record albums of dance music and songs, selling them to a worldwide market. It is worth recalling the example from chapter 3 of the kind of language used to discuss bands, which has come to sound like something found in rock-and-roll magazines.

Being in a band does not preclude participation in a regular schedule of sessions. It often complements a musician's musical experience. Bands are inherently different from sessions, though, in that membership in a band is consciously exclusive. Either one is 'in' a band or not. Bands will also create and rehearse various arrangements of tunes and 'sets' of tunes. A session in contrast is inclusive, and membership can differ on a nightly basis. This is not to say that a band, playing in a pub session environment remains exclusive. Other musicians can easily join in these sessions just like any other session, but they wouldn't be considered 'members' of the band. They'd be 'playing with the band'.

Bands will play in both session settings and more formal concert settings, which are fundamentally different. Concerts are normally scheduled far in advance, usually one of many on a 'tour'. Bands on tour are mobile, unlike modern session musicians who must remain in a relatively small area to play at their regular weekly scheduled sessions (see below). Concerts are formal events set in large concert halls or pubs with stages. The audience pays and tickets are taken at the door. Interestingly, one musician who plays regularly with a band and in sessions told me that often "people appreciate you more if they have to pay to hear you." He told me that the same musicians might play the next night in a pub session, which is free for the audience, play the same tunes, but might get a very poor response. The bands in Doolin are also generally much better at marketing themselves than individual musicians. Many individual musicians will, for example, have their own CDs for sale in shops, but bands are often more conscious of selling them during sessions in pubs and performances at concert halls. It is not unusual for an announcement to be made about CDs for sale and where the band might be playing next, but this is unusual for individual musicians at sessions. In other words, overt marketing is acceptable for bands, whereas this might be interpreted as conceit in an individual.

In certain instances, the differences between bands and sessions aren't apparent and hardly matter, and other times they can be drawn out and utilised. These differences, and the use of microphones and stages can be obvious to those with the receptive competence to know the difference. However, many tourists, lacking that receptive competence, don't seem to notice or mind either way. In fact, the use of microphones and concert-like 'stages' are expertly utilised by some bands to their advantage to 'put on a good show'. The 'arrangement' of harmonic 'parts' within predetermined tunes, interspersing ballads and

instrumental music, the planned transition from a jig to a reel (i.e., from a 6/8 to a 4/4 time-signature) in the same set, or a pre-arranged increase in tempo can be used to build a level excitement for the audience. The concert-like, staged atmosphere sets up the expectation for the audience of a 'show', a professional 'performance'. For example, one band in Doolin, comprised of four young men, were very good at creating a performative 'aura'. They bobbed their heads like rock-stars when they flew through sets at high speed, and would do encores at the end of their 'show'. One night, they even used the melody from the rock tune "Sweet Home Alabama" before launching into a set of reels. They knew how to 'perform' and were experts at whipping the audience into a frenzy.

It is useful at this point to highlight the difference between 'performing' and 'playing' traditional Irish music. Generally, the term 'performance' is a 'dirty word' in relation to the session context. It implies that musicians are not playing for their own benefit, but rather for the demands of the audience. It goes against one of the underlying principles of the session: the notion that it is a reciprocal social event for *both* the audience *and* the musicians (Kneafsey 2003:33). The audience in that sense is just as responsible for creating a social environment as the players. This relationship is derived from the relationship that musicians used to have with set dancers, complementary parts of a single whole. As the music became its own distinct folk-art-form during the Revival, separating itself from the dance, that reciprocal, inclusive principle remained. The value on spontaneity also prohibited any kind of performative structure. Importantly, sessions are played in pubs around tables, on the same physical level as the audience. There is no physical elevation of the music above the audience. So, musicians discuss 'playing' in sessions where this reciprocal, spontaneous relationship occurs in amongst an interactive audience.

'Performances' are different. In formal concert settings and sometimes in partially staged settings in pubs, the music is 'performed'. There can be a conscious intent to please the audience, to 'put on a good show.' In concert halls, where the music is most consciously 'performed', there is a physical elevation of the musicians onto a stage above the audience.

As with most things relating to traditional Irish music today, there are extreme examples, but most situations lie somewhere in between the poles, and this is the case with the notions of 'performance' and 'playing'. Some circumstances may make musicians *feel* like they are performing for the audience even if the physical location is a typical 'session' space. It is therefore also an existential determination. The behaviour of the audience, for example, can even change a 'session' into a 'performance'. One musician described the difference between a 'performance' and a 'session' this way:

I always found a fairly grey line between a 'session' and a 'performance'... You'd like it probably to be a 'session', but some nights it's inevitable that it's going to go that way [in the direction of a 'performance']. And most of the people, a lot of the tourists who come in, view it as a 'performance'. They sit down, waiting for it all to start, and it probably isn't as interactive as it could be...

If someone doesn't know the music, then a session is just music in the corner [of the pub]. Maybe for a musician, a session is sitting down, having a chat, a bit of craic, meeting new people, having fun, not having to play every two minutes... It's not like a performance on a stage where you're knocking it out. It's more a social thing.

In a session then, the musicians are socialising too. They are not 'working' for the audience. They are 'playing'. In that sense, a session is at least as much for the benefit of the players as it is for the audience. When a session is turned into a performance by the tourists' gaze, it becomes 'work' for the musicians, a 'job' because it is no longer for them. It is for the audience to consume..

Some tourist audiences especially seem to have an embedded expectation to see a 'show', a 'performance', and 'bands' have tapped into that expectation by producing a varied night of music. The owner of a Doolin B&B once told me that her patrons often find the partially 'staged' 'performances' of bands who tend to consciously utilise more musical variety more palatable; it's a musical environment that they're used to:

A lot of people who aren't into traditional Irish music, it all sounds the same... but it's nice to do the slow ballad and then the 'diddle-dee-i-dee-dee', and whatever—someone singing. They like the variety.

And in that respect it's more like a concert: always changing to get their attention back.

The result is that some audiences appreciate this kind of 'performance' atmosphere more than 'sessions' where musicians seem to talk a lot and "the music all sounds the same"—a common refrain from tourists.

All of these issues culminate into the 'rock-and-rollisation' of traditional Irish music. The use of microphones and stages, concert settings and tours, pre-arranged musical 'performances' in which musicians 'work' for the benefit of the audience, the marketing and selling of CDs, and audience expectations of a 'good show' are all in the direction of the way in which pop or rock music is created, performed and consumed.

### **Jigs for Gigs—or, How Payments Changed the Music**

Musicians were always paid in one form or another. In the auld days, music was categorised as a skill like any other, and musicians were the craftsmen of music. The term *musicianer* is indicative of this understanding of the music and its categorisation as a skilled craft. A musicianer provided a quality musical product to accompany set dancing just as a carpenter produced chairs. Craftsmen who provide products and services are compensated. As recalled from chapter 2, in the auld days, a musicianer might have been compensated with food, drinks or cash. When the Revival hit northwest Clare, the musical environment began to change. Musicians played the music for its own sake. The dancing began to be removed as an essential complementary element of its production. It could be argued that this separation of the music from the dancing created a situation whereby the music was no longer being produced for anyone but the musicians themselves (and an interested audiences of listeners), dislodging it from its original context as a 'service'. This is not to say that some musicians weren't being compensated for their craft in the pub-session setting in the auld days or even into the Revival as the corresponding association with dancing began to be severed. Gus O'Connor told me about the auld days and his relationship with the musicians as a publican:

I always gave em a few 'bob' anyway, before anybody ever asked me for money. They'd get their food, three meals if they were there all day. And if they were going somewhere, then you'd give them a fiver or a tener... anything they needed for a few pounds, you gave it to them. You didn't specify what amount, really.

He was reciprocally 'paying' musicians for their skilled craft, although it was never a 'specified amount' and never enough to call a 'wage' of any sort.

As the Revival hit Doolin, the size of the sessions and the size of the audiences took their toll on the musicians and the publicans. Some musicians began to look for quieter pubs to play in, away from the teeming crowds. In contrast, the publicans were growing dependent on the musicians to draw in the crowds of visitors, some of whom had travelled long distances to hear a bit of music. The natural thing to do was to pay a few local musicians to show up at a given time and start a session off. A symbiotic relationship developed. Paying musicians ensured that a session would happen on a regular basis, what some authors have called 'anchoring' (Vaysse as cited in McCann 2002:75) or 'seeding' a session. Eventually, these payments were transformed into a kind of 'wage', paid out at the end of the night. However, it is not as formal as that. Paid musicians are not employees; rather, as Fairbairn has argued, they are given the

"elevated status of desirable clients" (1993:159). However, paid sessions contribute towards a general professionalisation of the music (Bohlman 1988:85-86). Also, as Larson Sky has noted, 'career musicians' can also occasionally exhibit a kind of possessiveness about 'their' sessions (1997:126).

It was explained to me that the decision to pay musicians wasn't one that was made consciously at some given historical moment. There was a natural progression from reciprocal 'in-kind' payments to the pre-arranged wage-like payments today. Now, musicians and publicans have created a system in which three or four musicians agree to show up on a given night each week to host a session. No more than three or four musicians are paid to play, and normally one musician will be 'hired' by a publican to do the 'gig' once a week. That musician then decides who the other two or three musicians will be to join 'his' or 'her' session, and if the session is advertised in one form or another (verbally or in print), the evening will often simply be called 'Christy and friends' or 'Noel and friends'. Alternatively, a band might be hired, although again, no more than three or at most four, musicians are paid in Doolin. When this system was first becoming prominent during the Revival, it simply seeded the sessions. Others would inevitably join, and a larger session was ensured. Now, fewer and fewer travelling musicians come through northwest Clare, and many nights, the paid musicians will be the only one playing.



**Figure 7.4:** A typical session with three paid musicians

The recognition of a 'lead' musician (as in 'Christy and friends') might be seen as the emergence of hierarchy, but importantly, this relationship was extant before. It is now simply acknowledged by the structure. In most Irish sessions anywhere in the world, one or two players are recognised

as, what some writers have called, the 'alpha' musician. (Foy 1999:85). "This informal 'leader'", Cowdery explains, "must know an enormous number of tunes and must be able to think of them and suggest them on the spot, either by calling out their titles or by authoritatively starting them" (1990:13). A different kind of pseudo-hierarchy now exists within session circle, though. Now, there is always a core semi-circle of paid musicians led by the 'alpha musician', and a potential

semi-circle of unpaid musicians. I call it a *pseudo*-hierarchy because most musicians, paid or un-paid, do not tend to think of this relationship in terms of a hierarchy. The emphasis on communality and egalitarianism is still expressed despite the extraneous monetary realities. For example, non-paid musicians are still encouraged to 'lead' a set of tunes at least sometime during an evening. It is not only an important way to build the confidence of learning musicians, but it also emphasises communality. On one level, all of the musicians recognise that some are better players than others, and deference to the 'alpha musician' is certainly required. But no matter how good an 'alpha musician' might be, lesser talents must also be given the floor. Glassie describes the necessity of this mutual deference in the context of a ceili, but the description is apt here as well. "It is the responsibility of the entertaining man who occupies the ceili's center to pull others into performance, and it is the responsibility of those others, though acknowledged as lesser talents, to take their turn... diversifying the sport and giving the man who must do most of the work a rest" (1995[1982]:99-100).

Of course this is not always the case today. Some 'alpha musicians' will play straight through a session, showing off their virtuosity, actively excluding all others. This kind of exclusion of one musician by another is called 'freezing out'. Virtuosity can be extremely enjoyable to listen to, especially in a concert setting, but it can be as much of a death knell to a 'good session' as anything else. As musicians told me over and over, 'a bit of give and take' between musicians is much more important than 'showing off' one's talents.

A more obvious, professionalised hierarchy exists now though due to the paid structure of the sessions. There are semi-professional musicians now, and amateur musicians ('amateur' only in the sense that they are not paid, not that they are somehow less talented). Some of these unpaid musicians choose to remain outside of the system of paid sessions. Others would love to get involved. There are various reasons why a musician might remain outside the system of paid sessions even if they want to get 'in'. One reason might be that a musician is still in a learning stage and does not have enough tunes or the confidence to 'hold their own' in a session. Another reason might be that they are fairly new to the community and have fewer connections than more established musicians. Weekly paid positions are valued, and rarely can a person simply get 'hired' without having something of a reputation in the area, musically as well as personally.

The paid sessions almost always occur at 9:30 at night, the exception being the Sunday afternoon session, a traditional 'family-outing' day for the Irish. For the rest of the week, afternoon sessions are always unpaid, spontaneous and



irregular<sup>4</sup>. They start at any time of the day that a musician decides to unpack an instrument. Often, they don't start until later afternoon or into the evening, and if they go well, if there's 'good craic' and an attentive, interactive audience, they can last for many, many hours. Anything goes during these sessions, and long periods of chat between friends and witty banter between locals and tourists might ensue. Typically, local paid or unpaid musicians will start these informal sessions, and oftentimes, they consist of only one or two players. When locals start afternoon sessions, they tend to be dominated by ballad singing. The songs are just as often cover versions of songs by Eagles, John Denver, the Beatles, and Van Morrison as much as they are traditional Irish Ballads. Among the latter, songs about the region are common: *My Lovely Rose of Clare*, *From Clare to Here*, and *Freemantle Bay*, for example. Locals and tourists might 'request' a favourite song as well, although requests for *Danny Boy* or other over-popular songs might be met with a sarcastic, deflective comment: "Never heard of it", or "I'm not sure I know that one, but go on yourself. Let's hear it". There's no cognitive dissonance between the popular music and Irish ballads. 'A good song is a good song'. Less often, afternoon sessions are started by visiting tourist-musicians, and these sessions tend to consist more of the instrumental dance music: jigs, reels and hornpipes. Visiting tourist-musicians have come to play the music that Doolin is famous for, and this explains their desire to play the dance music. Locals on the other hand can hear 'traditional' sessions every night of the week and twice on Sundays, so the Eagles covers and ballads are refreshing.



Figure 7.5: A singer 'giving a song'

Unpaid, afternoon sessions can be brilliant or they can be second-rate. The level of talent can vary enormously. But no matter how good an afternoon session might be, by 9:30 at night when the paid musicians come into the pub, they are forced to finish. Numerous times I witnessed strong

afternoon sessions that led right up to 9:30 when the paid musicians came into the pub. Occasionally, the paid musicians would politely wait to start until the informal session 'wound down'. On a few occasions in the winter time, the paid musicians simply joined the

<sup>4</sup> These sessions occur most often in Doolin at O'Connor's Pub for two reasons. First, the pub is most associated with the Russell Brothers and the early history of music in Doolin and therefore, many visiting tourist musicians like to make it a point to have a tune or two at O'Connor's. In fact, there is a balance between visitors and resident musicians starting off these unpaid sessions. Secondly, in the winter months, O'Connor's is the only pub of the three in the village that opens before 6:00 p.m.



unpaid players. But most often, the paid musicians, although not with any intent of rudeness, simply sit down, tune up, and start their session. It is, after all, their 'job' to play. At O'Connor's pub, afternoon sessions almost always occur in the Front Room, the older part of the pub. However, in the summer, the official musicians' table is in the next room, the Main Bar. So in theory, the two sessions could occur simultaneously, but only if the speakers, projecting the paid sessions music throughout the pub, are disengaged in the Front Room. But this only occurred on very rare occasions, during the Micho Russell Festival for example. Instead, the paid session is amplified as usual, and the unpaid session in the Front Room is forced to quit. It is the clearest moment of demarcation that occurs between paid and unpaid musicians.

The issue of pay is sometimes seen as a sign that the music has become a 'commodity' for sale to tourists. Particularly during the busy summer months, musicians often feel like they are, as one musician told me, "performing monkeys in a cage!" However, even these musicians are often more circumspect when pressed on the issue, and largely, the problem centres around the difference between 'playing' and 'performing'. As the publican Peter Curtin told me when he was describing why publicans needed to pay musicians,

You have a requirement... You have tourists coming in, expecting music. So the only way was to—in a guaranteed scenario—is to pay people to play music. Now, if you pay people to play music, in a sense that's OK, provided of course that the situation remains static and didn't change. By that I mean, the cultural way of life—of people's *heads*—didn't change... So, you have to be careful, if people come playing music for money, that they don't just go through the mechanical act of playing the music for money for the sake of entertaining people, rather than them enjoying music for themselves. You know—playing their own tunes for their own selves. If it becomes a job, if it becomes a function of business, then that's—y'know—not the ideal scenario. [But] there are people out there love what they're doing.

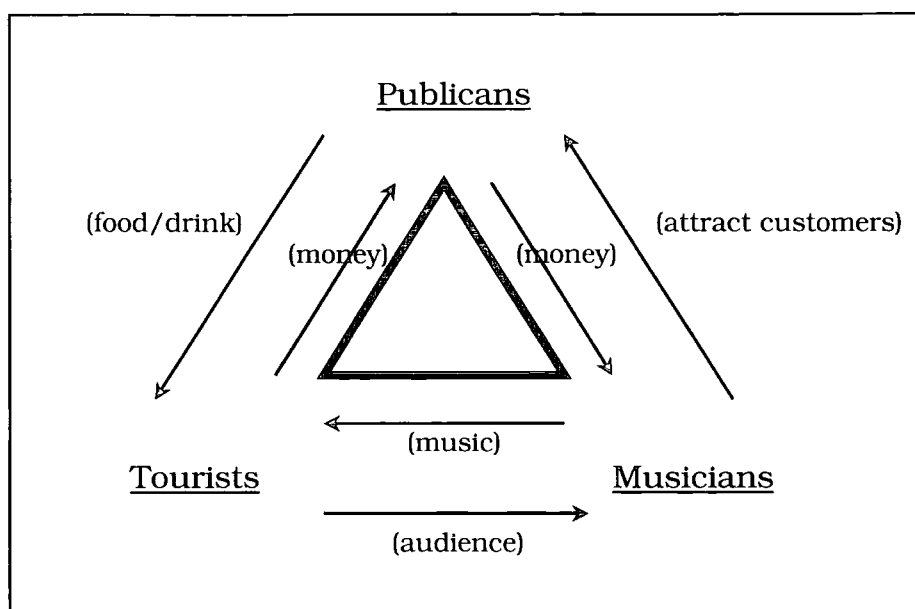
Essentially, Peter is contrasting between musicians whose motivation is to 'play' the music (and pay is secondary) and musicians whose first motivation is to get paid to 'perform'. Again, there are extremes. Some musicians play only because they want the money or just to 'perform'. There are also some musicians who, on principle, refuse to become paid musicians at all. More commonly, musicians refuse to *depend* on paid sessions for their livelihood, thus preventing an erosion of their enjoyment of 'playing' even while getting paid.

Importantly, like all other aspects of life in northwest Clare, there is a dramatic seasonal variation in the paid session 'schedules' in Doolin. In the

summertime, there is a paid session every night of the week in all three pubs, and twice on a Sunday at O'Connor's Pub. After the tourist season ends, the publicans start paying for fewer sessions during the weekdays. By November, sessions are paid for only on the weekends. O'Connor's hosts sessions Fridays through Mondays. One of the Roadford pubs has sessions on Fridays and Saturdays, and at Doolin's third pub, they discontinue all paid sessions in the depths of the winter. This doesn't preclude unpaid sessions, but these are much rarer, and one has to be lucky enough to be in the right pub at the right time to catch one. The Micho Russell Festival occurs during the last weekend in February, and for all intents and purposes, this marks the beginning of the 'musical year'. By mid to late March, paid sessions are added to the weekly schedules, and soon, there's a sessions every night again in all three pubs. As Kneafsey points out, this dependence on tourism means that a kind of 'symbiotic relationship' has emerged between paid-for sessions and tourism (2003:35). The music would go on without tourism and paid sessions simply because it is loved by many local people; there would simply be fewer sessions in general.

### **The Triangle of Consumption**

The system of payments creates what I call a 'triangle of consumption' in Doolin sessions. Publicans pay musicians to play at given times on given nights of the week. There's an economic capital that is gained by the musicians from publicans. The publicans are able to attract huge tourist crowds into the pubs partially by advertising the fact that a session will happen at 9:30. When I worked as a barman, the most common question asked by tourists was, "When does the music start?" It is a tourist mantra. Publicans reap large profits of course from the tourist consumption of alcohol and food. Meanwhile, tourists 'consume' the music's symbolic capital. It is a kind of souvenir for most tourists. At the height of the summer tourist season, sessions in Doolin are accompanied by arrhythmic flashes from cameras. Tourists sit or stand near the session collectively 'gazing' at the musicians (Urry 2002:43). The visual/aural experience itself is a kind of consumption, and the photographs (and sometimes the recordings that tourists make) can be taken home as a more literal type of souvenir. The issue of how much a tourist audience truly appreciates or even understands what their seeing/hearing is contestable, however (Kneafsey 2003:33-34). Furthermore, the popular concept of the tourist 'gaze' is an inadequate metaphor for the tourist consumption of traditional Irish music because music is, first and foremost, aurally experienced (Connell and Gibson 2003:221).



**Figure 7.6:** The Triangle of Consumption

Of course, the model I present here is highly idealised. In terms of economic capital, the publicans are set to gain the most out of the relationship. In terms of symbolic capital, the tourists gain the most by 'consuming' the experience of seeing, hearing, and photographing a session. The musicians gain a monetary compensation for showing up at a given time to play. For some musicians, their fee is just supplemental income. For others, it makes up most or all of their earnings. In other words, a paid musician can now live off the music although the income is not substantial. Additionally, this relationship provides a consistent venue for the music to be played to a largely appreciative audience. The disproportionate profits that musicians and publicans make is sometimes criticised by musicians and connoisseurs of the music as exploitative. On the other hand, publicans must be very conscious of the amount of money they pay out to musicians on an annual basis. A retired publican once told me,

I wouldn't like to be in the business now. You'd want to have a good business to pay three or four musicians. At the end of the year, if you added it up, that could be most of your profit.

No, I wouldn't like running the business now.

In other words, tensions have emerged over these paid relationships, but largely, everyone recognises the necessity of this symbiosis. Also, note that money never passes between the musicians and the tourists. The publicans act as the brokers of all economic exchanges in the triangle.

Curiously, there is an almost ubiquitous sense of disappointment if tourists find out that the musicians get paid. I say "if" because unless they ask, no one would tell them. The assessment of an American tourist is representative:

The town has become too touristy. The 'sessions' seem to be hired musicians who are paid to entertain the tourists. This has been authenticated by my friends who live here... I love the area around Doolin, but not Doolin itself... I wish I could have visited Doolin about 15 years ago when it wasn't so big. However, I understand that tourism is a vital economic need for the West.

Another tourist, this time originating from South Africa, told me:

Back in 1983 the musicians gathered spontaneously, the music was authentic, the vibe was less touristy. This time the musicians were obviously paid to be there, [the] music was good nonetheless and was authentic 'traditional', and I suppose to those who wanted to just experience the music, [it was] totally adequate.

The underlying assumption is that the music cannot be spontaneous if there is an economic relationship that 'forces' musicians to show up at given times. It is seen as a structural relationship that automatically marks it as too controlled and therefore 'inauthentic'. However, it must be remembered that musicians have always been paid for playing music, and the payments themselves aren't the only forces of change or even the primary force of change. Interestingly, this tourist clearly related the influence that tourism has had on creating this socio-economic 'triangle of consumption', and what's more, assumed that this was only occurring in Doolin and not "the area around Doolin". The first assumption is true, but the second is not. Musicians are now paid to play gigs in most towns and villages around northwest Clare.

### **Limited Mobility and Musicians' Routes**

Another interesting result of the system of paying musicians to play is that it immobilises them to a certain extent. Because of the verbal contractual arrangements that publicans and musicians make, paid musicians are now expected to play at a specified pub on a given night each week unless they find someone else to 'fill in'. This affects a musicians' experience of a session in two important ways.

Firstly, a paid musician is required by their verbal contract with a publican to not only show up at a given time to start off a session, but also to sit the night out. In other words, they are paid to *show up* and to *stay*. This is important because most sessions are, in most musicians' estimations, simply mediocre or

worse. It is relatively rare to have a 'mighty session' imbued with 'great craic' (see chapter 8). Musicians often told me that only one in fifty or one in a hundred sessions are 'truly great'. However, the paid musician cannot get up and leave a mediocre session and find a better one like they would have done during the Revival (and what some musicians still do on nights that they aren't paid). The worst scenario for a paid musician is when a session goes truly bad. A terrible visiting musician might join the session. An arrogant virtuoso might also join and attempt to dominate it. The crowd, for whatever reason, might be particularly unresponsive or too loud. A fellow musician might be drunk or in a sour mood. Regardless, the paid musician has to stay.

This is particularly evident on Bank Holiday weekends and in the summertime when the number of tourists swells and the crowd noise becomes deafening. On very busy nights, amplification can even become pointless. Musicians complain that they can't even hear themselves playing much less attempt to have a good session. One musician told me, "That's what we call a 'Put Your Head Down' Night". In other words, all you can do as a paid musician is put your head down, ignore the crowd as best you can, and get through the night. The porosity between the session and the audience gets clogged. Paul, a fiddler originally from South Africa explains:

The reasons for having a kind of 'closed session' can be that the people there [the audience] *don't* understand what's going on. And that's the only way you *can* have a decent session, is by kind of to insulating it, and just tearing into some tunes and listening to each other, and not *caring* what's going on outside you. And that does make sense because you're surrounded by people who don't have any *clue* about what the music is and what it's about...

The music and what makes it good for the musicians, that's why they *do* enclose. They want to keep that—you know—. They want to keep it going and it's hard when there are too many distractions... and it can disjoint the whole thing.

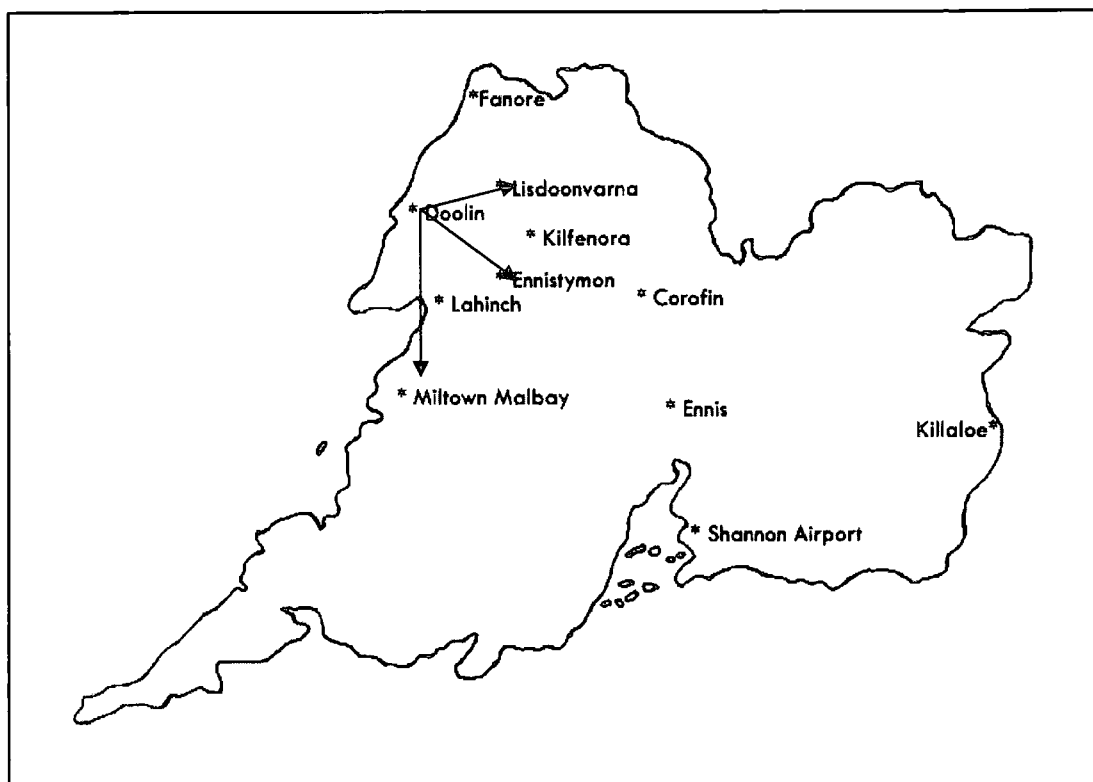
Secondly, being a regular paid musician disallows them from travelling great distances for sessions, ('great distances' roughly meaning travel that would require an overnight stay or longer). But one of the features that musicians told me was exciting about the Revival period was the fact that so many musicians were travelling around, trading tunes. One musician went so far as to argue that this immobilisation, an offshoot of getting paid, has influenced traditional Irish music more than anything else in recent years. The pay itself had no 'real' influence, he argued, and tourism, the recording industry, and all of the other 'modern' pressures on the music were secondary as well. Others felt differently

for sure, but the fact is that paid musicians are less free to travel far afield, and this has no doubt changed the practice of session attendance.

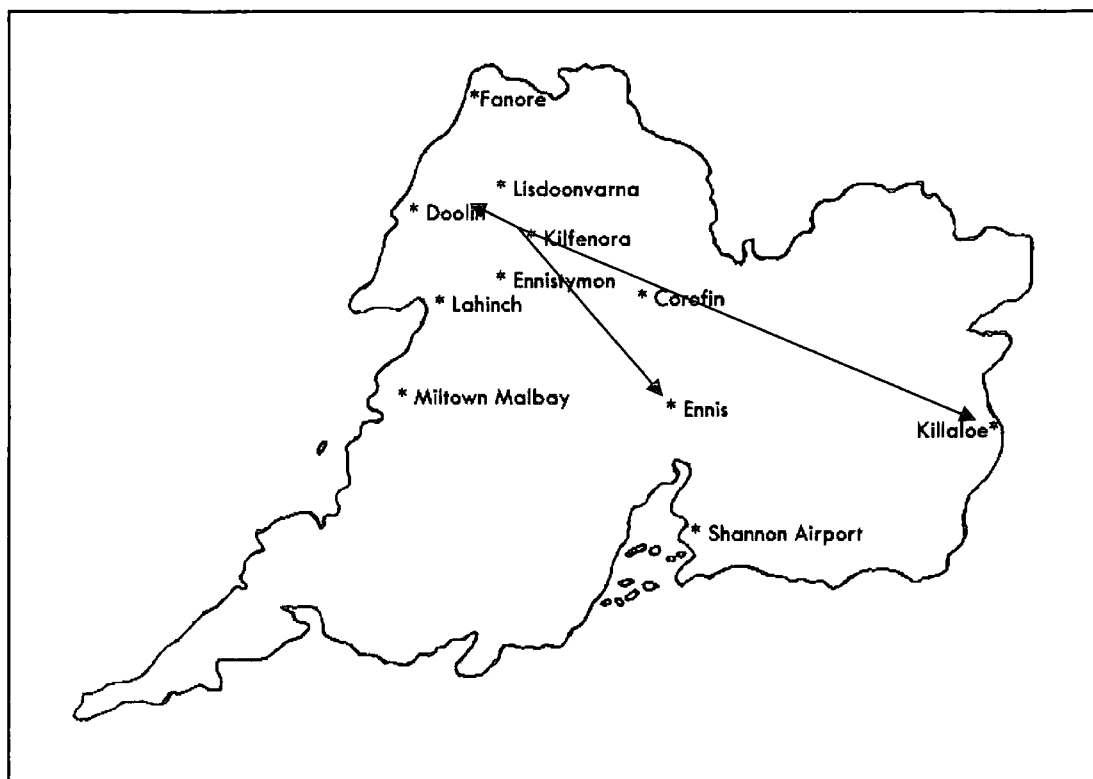
'Immobilisation' is perhaps too strong a term, however. More accurately, paid musicians are more restricted in their movements nowadays. Musicians do in fact travel regularly for their sessions, and many musicians have a standard weekly circuit that they have created for themselves, playing different nights in different towns. On the following page there are two examples of weekly routes that two different musicians regularly travelled in order to get to their paid sessions. Both examples show a singular originating point (where they reside), and the three paths they regularly took during the winter of 2002-2003. Both musicians played more than one night a week in some of these locations. In the first example, the musician played in Doolin two nights a week, and once a week in the other locations. In the second example, the musician played twice a week in Ennis, twice in Doolin and once in Killaloe.

This kind of regional travel is common, and to some musicians' thinking, essential. Many musicians feel that playing four or five nights in the same village or town begins the wear one down. Variety keeps things lively. Some Doolin musicians also feel that it's important to get away from the mania of the bigger tourist crowds in Doolin especially in the summer season. Quieter nights in other, neighbouring towns can alleviate the stress caused if one were to play to large crowds every night in the summer.

Sometimes, if two musicians play regularly with each other, they might travel and play along the same route for part of the week. But oftentimes, different nights in different pubs in different towns means meeting up with different musicians. In other words, various combinations of musicians will meet weekly in different venues. This pattern of travelling along a session route is not unique to paid musicians only, however. Unpaid musicians also travel for a particular weekly session in a particular pub, and what's more, most musicians do not play paid sessions every night of the week. Some play only two or three nights per week, and play as unpaid musicians on other nights on which they are free to choose which session to attend. The result is that musicians come and go on a weekly basis, they shift from venue to venue, and the attendance on any given night (although you might know who the three paid musicians will be) might vary substantially.



**Figure 7.7:** Musician's Weekly Session Route #1



**Figure 7.8:** Musician's Weekly Session Route #2



Finally, since there are far fewer paid sessions in the wintertime, a complex pattern of weekly sessions emerges which changes season by season. Some musicians plan for the dearth of paid sessions in the wintertime by agreeing to play the more frantic weekend sessions throughout the summertime. The weekends tend to be the busiest days of the week no matter what time of year, and during the summer, the weekend sessions are often the hardest hit by disruptively overbearing crowd noise. These musicians cope with this for the summer months in order to ensure a steady gig in the wintertime. Generally though, as the seasons change, and as some sessions are dropped or added to weeknight session schedules, it gives musicians the opportunity to form new combinations of players.

My point here is not simply descriptive, though. I mean to show that there is a great deal of movement and shifting even within this structured system of paid 'gigs'. There is regular weekly movement for paid musicians who have set up a schedule at various regional venues. This weekly movement often changes with the seasons as sessions are dropped from a pub's weekly schedule come wintertime, and added in the summertime. So, season by season and year by year, paid musicians' session routes change as they set up new gigs for the new season possibly with new musicians. Sometimes new musicians move into the area and enter into the system of paid sessions (see chapter 8), while others leave. Moreover, unpaid musicians, visiting musicians, or paid musicians with a night off (from playing a gig) are free to join any session. So, the make-up of sessions is even more interchangeable.

More importantly, all of this shifting, movement and interchangeability is at the discretion of the individual musicians themselves. The agreements that paid musicians make with publicans are provisional enough that they must be renewed seasonally. And nothing stops a musician from quitting a weekly gig if they are unhappy. There is no formal contract here. It is a relationship built on reputation and trust. And despite the bad nights in which musicians are more or less forced into closing off the session from any kind of porous engagement with the audience, the choice to become a paid musician is a personal one. Musicians are free agents in these relationships. Therefore, despite the build-up of this socio-economic relationship around the music, it does not control the musicians. More generally, as my music teacher from the village put it, "I don't think the *music* has gone commercial; I think it's everything *surrounding* it." It is worth exploring her contention a bit here.

#### IV.

#### Commercialisation, Commodification and Control

Greenwood introduced the concept of 'cultural commoditization' to the tourism literature in 1977, arguing that as local behaviours and practices are marketed and 'sold' for tourist consumption, the original meaning of those behaviours and practices are robbed (1989 [1977]:179). As marketed and consumable 'products' they become meaningless to their producers (*ibid.*). Cohen puts a finer point on the definition of commoditisation by describing it as "a process by which things (and activities) come to be valued primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services)... stated in terms of prices from [sic] a market" (1988:380). Chambers thinks more generally about the notion of commercialisation, suggesting that authenticity "occurs under conditions in which people have significant control over their affairs, to the extent that they are able to play an active role in determining how changes occur in their social settings" (2000:98). Chambers qualifies his statement by pointing out that "communities are [not] always in agreement as to what constitutes authentic representations... The critical point rests with how much opportunity community members have to disagree and try to settle among themselves the terms by which they are represented" (*ibid.*).

I would take this whole argument one step further and suggest that commercialisation and commoditisation are two different processes. Often, these two concepts are conflated, but I conceive of commoditisation as a particular commercialising process whereby the produced thing *itself* is given a consumptive market value. In other words, I would stick to Cohen's definition and argue that a commoditised product or service is one that has "come to be valued *primarily* in terms of [its] trade value" (1988:380, my italics). The attempts by organisations such as IMRO to turn particular arrangements of tunes into royalty-generating, individually owned *things* with a real and predetermined market value, is a process of commodification. I contend that commercialisation is more a general process. It is simply the introduction or intensification of monetary exchange in *relation to the production* of a thing. In other words, commercial relationships between publicans and musicians have been built up around the production of Irish music, but market values attached to its *consumption* have not been put into place. As I point out, there is no money that changes hands between tourists and musicians<sup>5</sup>, the exception being the few musicians who occasionally sell a CD to an audience member after a session. Based on these criteria, I would

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<sup>5</sup> Kneafsey (2003:36) reports the same in north county Mayo.

argue that the sessions in Doolin have certainly become commercialised, but they have not become commoditised.

There is another assumption here that needs clarification. The commercialisation of the supposedly formerly authentic artefact or behaviour is often assumed to be in direct opposition to any notion of authenticity (Greenwood 1989 [1977]:179). What was once produced for itself as a useful, functional product for the producers is modified into an object that becomes saleable to the outsider whose only interest in it is as a souvenir, an object for collection with little or no sense of functionality. The commodified object or behaviour simply serves as proof of an interactive experience with some other locale (MacCannell 1989 [1976]:148). This conflation of functionality and authenticity is extremely simplistic and does not take into account local viewpoints. Given a more pragmatic understanding of the notions of authenticity and commercialism, it is untenable to suggest that they cannot coexist. Both concepts are socially negotiable. This idea is not necessarily new in the tourist literature (Cohen 1988) or in ethnomusicology (Moore 2002). Indeed, as Moore suggests, the fact that 'authenticity' is something to fight for and argue about, means that it is not an objective Truth and is therefore at least partially relative (*ibid.*:211).

In the original sense, authenticity occurs when one can prove that an item is what it says it is. In order for an object to be objectively authentic, it can't have been made for the consumption of outsiders, whether they be tourists or museum collectors. The producer should only have desired to make the object for his/her own use (Cohen 1988:375). But Cohen argues that social scientists "appear to entertain more rigorous criteria of authenticity than do ordinary members of the travelling public" (*ibid.*:375-376) and, I would add, some locals in touristed destinations. Martin Stokes' adds a voice to this debate in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music* (1994) where, to generalise, he argues that musical 'meaning' (and therefore any perception of 'authenticity') is dependent on the 'identity' (or social status) of the listener. Various degrees of strictness apply to the definition of 'authenticity' then, and hence, it becomes untenable to insist that no amount of overlap can exist between commercialisation and authenticity.

In order to claim that sessions in Doolin have been commoditised one would have to argue that they have been given a market value, and furthermore, that the content of the session is controlled by the demands, desires, and whims of the consumers; in this case, the tourists. It would turn a session into a kind of live juke-box. In reality, there is no set market value on tunes or sessions. Of course, the musicians are in fact paid by publicans, and indeed in the summertime, primarily for tourist consumption. But neither tourist audiences nor publicans make a direct payment for the session as a 'product' in and of

itself. Instead, I would argue that the socio-economic structure of the Triangle of Consumption that has emerged around the paid session is a move in the direction of commercialisation.

An important question to ask is the extent to which this move towards commercialisation implies that the session, as it is experienced in Doolin, has become 'inauthentic'. In relation to Chambers' requirements, we must look at how much control the producers of the music have over its production, and how much control they have over the "terms by which they are represented" (Chambers 2000:99). The fact that musicians are paid to show up at 9:30 p.m. to start a session is clearly a loss of some control. Also, the decision to amplify a session is almost entirely at the discretion of the publican, and in this regard, musicians do lose a degree of control over how they are represented to audiences.

Only *rarely* does a situation emerge whereby the publican would actually tell the musicians what or how to play. Once, I heard about a publican who demanded, during a music festival, that no songs were to be sung. The publican was worried that a particular singer would sing *English* rather than Irish ballads. Not knowing the difference himself, but wanting to produce a purely 'Irish' evening of music to impress the influx of festival tourists, he banned all singing for the night. On another occasion, a publican became concerned that the musicians were playing too many non-Irish instrumental tunes (gypsy tunes, American tunes, etc.). The most common examples, however, were for publicans to complain that the musicians were talking too much in between sets of music, or that the musicians showed up too late. If extremely annoyed with a particular musician's behaviour, the publican can actually 'fire' the musician, but this is very rare. In fact, it is very rare for publicans to get involved with the music's production at all unless they think that there's a problem. But the publican's involvement in these situations, however minimal, represents a loss of some control.

Almost ubiquitously, however, once the session starts, the musicians have control over what goes on in the session, not the publicans nor the audience. They can invite local singers or tourists to come up and 'give a song', or they can even let other visiting musicians take control over the session. The very base-line responsibility as a paid musician is simply to *start off* the session. Often, few or no unpaid musicians turn up to play, so the paid musicians must carry the night. If a large number of unpaid musicians show up and are keen to play though, the paid musicians are under little obligation to maintain any sort of 'leading' role. For example, I recall one night when a regular paid musician wasn't feeling well and decided he would only play the spoons all night instead of his regular instrument. He was able to do this because so many visiting

musicians had arrived and he was able to let them 'carry the night'. The fact that one gets paid for showing up at a session in no way precludes the fact that the session has the potential to be 'mighty'. If they don't really feel 'into it', a paid musician can easily play some easy 'standards' and not expend a great deal of creative energy.

Additionally, musicians can easily quit their weekly scheduled session-night if they are annoyed with the publican for any reason. This is, in fact, much easier to do and more common than a publican 'firing' a musician. Publicans have become dependent upon musicians to play in the pubs, but musicians often have many monetary options available to them. Moreover, most musicians have 'day-jobs' and only play a few nights a week. For those whose only income is derived from paid sessions, the control that publicans have over them is greater. Finally, paid musicians get a fee of course. The fee varies slightly from musician to musician depending on their 'working' relationship with the publican (and to some extent their ability to draw crowds), but generally, a musician can make an average of 20.00 Euros an hour for a gig. Compared to other tourist industry wages, this is very much at the high end.

I would contend, therefore, that the musicians have maintained a great deal of control over the production of their music. The loss of control is not significant enough anyway for me to conclude that the traditional Irish music sessions played in Doolin are somehow 'inauthentic', 'false', or 'staged' solely for the benefit of tourists; and besides, they are compensated for some of this loss of control. Interestingly, many musicians told me that they often even preferred to play for tourists rather than to a local audience for the simple reason that tourists are often a more excited and receptive audience than locals.

Perhaps the thrust of this discussion would be clearer by comparison, and bolstered by the 'performance theory' proposed by Richard Schechner. Schechner has argued that "[n]o performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment" (1994[1977]:120). but "[e]fficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum" (*ibid.*).

Towards the extreme end of Schechner's entertainment-efficacy spectrum would be the musical performances at places like Bunratty Castle in southern county Clare. This dilapidated medieval castle was restored in the 1960s and was eventually handed over to Shannon Heritage with the purpose of hosting medieval banquets for tourists. A theme park with various styles of old Irish cottages from the area, complete with farmyards and livestock, dot the grounds. The visitor is able to walk into them, poke around the farm machinery and generally be as investigative as they want to be. In the evenings, medieval banquets are held in the castle, and the paying diners are entertained with music

and song produced by musicians and singer/actors dressed in period costumes. A musician who currently plays music for these banquets told me about the program as it exists today.

It's a very *set* program. It has to run within a given time. So that leaves restrictions as well.

And the type of music they play, *I* feel, is totally cliché. It's down to, for example, they play "Danny Boy". But they used to do it in *Irish*, which is beautiful. And the tourists used to ask, "Why don't you sing 'Danny Boy'?" They had to change it back to *English*. And they've chosen songs that everybody can clap or join into.

She explained that on the one hand, an attempt is made to make the details of the performance (the acting, the costumes, the décor, the music, and the food) historically authentic. On the other hand, there is this pull to satisfy the tourists' demands by playing and singing *popular*, not necessarily *historic*, song and tunes. The performance here is tightly controlled, consciously produced for a tourist audience, and employs a 'museum definition' of authenticity (which is balanced with healthy amount of capitalist deference for consumer's desires). In other words, this is a highly commoditised musical product, produced not for the producers, but solely for the consumption of paying tourists. Moreover, the representation of the music (by means of advertisements, 'directing' the performances) is almost entirely outside of the control of the musicians. The informant above discusses how "*they*" make decisions about the performances, not her and her fellow musicians. Also, Bunratty is widely and aggressively advertised, and the performers have no control over this representation. While

she enjoys the work, she told me she feels infinitely freer in other musical contexts like when she's 'busking'.

At the other extreme might be the kind of public performance that occurs at a small old-style country pub situated next to St. Bridget's Well on the backside of the Cliffs of Moher. Every Thursday night for many years, the local farmers come out for a



Figure 7.9: A harpist busking at the Cliffs



few drinks, to socialise and to play a few tunes. The musicians who attend this session are generally older, and a few of them are quite renowned, but past their prime. It's 'lovely music', and a good night in quiet company. It's a very causal affair and it is produced for its own sake. Here, there's no confused agenda, no hint of commercial motivations, and indeed no reason to play every Thursday night except for the sheer enjoyment of doing so. Moreover, there is no advertising, or for that matter, any representation of this session in *any* form other than amongst known friends and family<sup>6</sup>.

The distinction between the kind of commoditised performance at Bunratty Castle and the session at St. Bridget's Well is comparable to other scenarios around the world whereby some performances are staged solely to entertain tourists while others are performed for locals. In Bali, for example, Castelo-Branco notes that in the 1970s, when tourists first flooded in to see local religious rituals, the efficacy of the rituals declined (1991:115-116). Now, the rituals are staged for tourists (seen largely as an artistic entertainment by all included) alongside the same rituals for local people (seen as efficaciously religious) (*ibid.*). The Balinese have gone from being detrimentally impacted by tourism to reaching a kind of symbiosis with tourism.

In Doolin, a musicians' motivation for playing *does* become entangled with commercialism. In other words, the distinction between staged and unstaged performances is not as clear. Sometimes, one wonders of some musicians in Doolin are playing for enjoyment, for the money, for both, or for other reasons entirely, like exposure to large audiences. However, Doolin is not so commercialised as to make parallels with the likes of Bunratty Castle. In fact, Doolin sessions are closer in form and content to St. Bridget's Well. The surface trappings of commercialism have painted the exterior of performances in Doolin, confusing the issue, but musicians largely maintain control over the make-up of the session. No one is telling them what tunes to play, how to play them, or when to stop playing the diddle-dee-dee and sing *Danny Boy* (in English) because the tourists request it.

The sessions in Doolin are advertised in two ways, one of which does reflect a loss of control over how the local expression of the music is represented. Occasionally, local advertisements for Doolin's pubs publicize the fact that they host sessions. Notices like these, however, hardly have the ability to misrepresent the music. One small but significant way in which the music is misrepresented is when tourists ask bar-workers who the musicians are. It's a

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, my wife and I lived very close to this pub for most of the year, but it was only after about 6 months in the field that we first heard about this session. It's not a guarded secret or a private affair. It's simply not well-known.



common question, strangely enough<sup>7</sup>. The answer which is given most often (and I was instructed to use this answer myself) was simply "locals".

More importantly though, the tourist literature represents Doolin as the "unofficial capital of Irish traditional music" (Kelleher 2003:376) with "some of the best music pubs in the west" (Callan, *et al* 2002:447). However, stereotyping compliments such as these are also accompanied by stereotyping misrepresentations and even disparaging remarks. I already mentioned in chapter 4 how one author misleadingly described Doolin as a "row of thatched fisherman's cottages" (Kelleher 2003:381), but the next few passages in the same text describe the pub scene in an equally misleading manner. One pub is supposedly "jammed with tourists... You couldn't find a local inside if your life depended on it. That's because they're all just up the road, downing pints of Guinness and listening to just-as-wonderful traditional music" at one of the other pubs (*ibid.*). Stereotypes about the drinking habits of the 'local' Irish aside, these kinds of assessments are superficial but extremely powerful when it comes to the impressions that tourists create. After reading this passage, one publican sardonically remarked, "Just wait. Now *that* pub will be jammed with tourists next year, and the guidebooks will all say that *this* is where all of the locals are!"

Outside of Doolin, plenty of examples from around the area fall in between these two ends of the entertainment-efficacy spectrum. Doolin is not alone in finding its sessions somewhat surrounded by commercialising processes. Musicians are paid in quiet little sessions in neighbouring towns and villages, although microphones and amplification are rarely seen. Ennistymon and Lisdoonvarna, for example, are not exactly on the 'tourist trail' as such in the same way that Doolin is, and as a result, the sessions there attend to be more intimate affairs at the height of the tourist season. Occasionally the locals might even clear away some tables and get up to dance a few 'sets' just like in the auld days. But even these sessions have paid musicians. Taking Schechner's continuum a bit over-literally, one might argue that Doolin sessions in the summertime are definitely further along a continuum towards entertainment than sessions in Lisdoonvarna or Ennistymon, but nowhere near the music played at Bunratty Castle. As we will see in chapter 9, the issue of authenticity is much more complicated.

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<sup>7</sup> It's 'strange' because the tourists wouldn't know the musicians names anyway. Some of the musicians are well-known within traditional music circles, but most tourists who ask "Who's playing tonight?" are not connoisseurs of this music and wouldn't know them. It seems to be just another question to start conversation, but it is one of the 5 or 10 questions that get asked 100 times a day in the summertime. One of my co-workers, tired of answering this particular question said one day: "Van Morrison, Bono, and Sinead O'Connor", but the response from the tourist was, apparently, the same as always: "Ah, OK, thanks. Um, Where are the toilets?"

## V.

### Conclusions

The Celtic Tiger ushered in a period of phenomenal economic growth and a period of burgeoning growth in mass tourism, locally and nationally. A growing element of commercialisation has come to effect the spaces, both literally and figuratively conceived, between the tourism and the music. The music became commercialised in the sense that money came to influence the music more than it did before. A simplistic conclusion would be that this is an inherently bad thing, and that pay, tourism, and marketing the recordings of traditional music should be lamented. Yet that kind of conclusion takes a number of concepts as givens, and conflates the notions of commercialisation, 'commoditisation' and 'authenticity'. Instead, I argue that the music in Doolin is commercialised but not commoditised. Furthermore, the music itself is not controlled in any significant way by anyone other than the producers of the music. Therefore, commercialisation does not necessarily erode authenticity. I don't expect that this will change either. Tourists are disparaging of the commercialisation process in places like Doolin where they expect to experience something that they perceive to be 'authentic'. Musicians and publicans are well aware of the danger of over-commercialisation (Taylor 2003:279), and won't, I expect, undermine the control that musicians have over their music to any great extent. All of these trends run parallel to other globalising trends I have examined in this thesis, and they culminate in an overall process of consolidation whereby institutions, commercialism, and even the structure of performances have begun to ossify around the music.

The effects of tourism on the music scene in Doolin have been important, and they cause a certain amount of tension and disillusionment. As ever though, it is taken in stride, and a sense of humour persists:

#### **Doolin Bank Holiday**

It being a Bank Holiday I went into McGann's  
To listen to the music and to try a couple of cans.  
I sat down in the corner with my backy and my jar<sup>8</sup>  
And listened to the people as they came into the bar.

The first guy was an Aussie wearing a floral shirt and shorts  
A reject out of "Baywatch", he was into water sports.  
Thought Theresa's name<sup>9</sup> was Sheila and Australian beer was best  
And didn't give a Four X<sup>10</sup> for the lager in the West.

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<sup>8</sup> "backy" is slang for tobacco and a "jar" is a pint.

<sup>9</sup> Theresa McGann is one of the former publicans of McGann's.

<sup>10</sup> "XXXX" is the brand name of Australian lager.

Next, six Germans they came in with rucksacks on their backs.  
They were very disappointed when they heard the price of Schnapps.  
They took their rucksacks off their backs and piled them by the doors.  
Then they ordered "half of Smith-Wicks<sup>11</sup>" and half a dozen straws.

An English couple they came in with Charles, their favourite son.  
They thought they'd pay a visit. They thought that the peace had been won.  
They ordered cucumber sandwiches and a pot of tea for two.  
They never had the stomach for that awful Irish stew.

The next guy was American. He was searching for his roots.  
His grandfather's name was Kennedy and his mother played the flute.  
He ordered an Irish coffee with a shamrock on the top  
And he wanted to take a picture, it was such a beautiful spot.

The next lads they came from Offaly. They'd a pass out for the day.  
They left their wife and kids at home and they'd come to Clare to play.  
They ordered sixteen pints of stout and then they shouted for more  
And then twenty minutes later both collapsed upon the floor.

The list goes on forever, international through and through  
With every kind of foreigner – and some from Doolin too.  
They came to hear the music in the corner by the boys  
But they never heard anything. There was too much fucking noise.

—lyrics by Jamie Storer<sup>12</sup>, set to the tune of *Spancil Hill*

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<sup>11</sup> "Smithwicks" is the brand name of an Irish bitter. It is pronounced smið-icks with a voiced 'th' and a silent 'w', but tourists often mispronounce it by using a soft voiceless 'th' sound and fully pronouncing the 'w'.

<sup>12</sup> (Kramer 1997)

## Chapter Eight—Appropriation

Meeting another musician for the first time is an elaborate encounter: a cat-and-mouse game, a courting ritual, or an exchange of phatic gifts. Ground rules are drawn up. It's a kind of poker, trying to suss out the other's hand, and whether he has any wild cards up his sleeve. We work out suits or suites or sets of tunes.

—Ciaran Carson (1996:75).

I wonder if the visitors knew that some of the musicians were also visitors? Or, did they think it was all local people playing, in some time-honoured ancient way?... It struck me that most of the musicians tonight were from other places—I think only Seamus was actually born in the county. Yet this has nothing to do with its authenticity—it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that if it's not being played by the local-born Irish, then it's fake. Ultimately, whether authenticity is endowed on an event depends on the meanings that musicians and listeners attach to it.

—Moya Kneafsey (2002:256)

### I.

#### Preamble and Segue

In the previous chapters, I described the historical circumstances that led, first, to the Revival of the music and then, secondly, to its subsequent commercialisation and consolidation. I laid out the local, national and sometimes international socio-economic underpinnings that fuelled these changes. I illustrated the increasing impact of outsiders on the social life and the musical life of Doolin. I described in detail some of the actors involved in those dramas—the locals, the blow-ins and the tourists—and we have heard them speak. We have also seen how these actors interact, and how blow-ins integrate into the local lifeworld (but within limits and not without negotiation). In relation to the musical interaction with tourism then, the task so far has been to answer two questions: “what has happened?” and “what caused what happened?” In the final two chapters, I answer two slightly different questions; namely, “how is it possible that this has happened?” and “what might it mean?” This chapter addresses the former question and the penultimate chapter deals with the latter.

As Anderson pointed out over twenty years ago in *Imagined Communities* (1983), a community and a national territory are not the same thing. More recently, Hannerz has written that this assumed one-to-one correlation “between

culture and territory" should not be the only thing "that bothers us. No less at issue", he argues, "is the assumption that the carrier of 'a culture' is 'a people'" (1996:22). In the first part of this chapter, I take Hannerz's point that in the globalised and globalising world—what he calls the "global ecumene" (*ibid.*:7)—it is increasingly difficult to draw the same lines around people, places, and traditions. One contribution that this thesis strives to make is to provide one detailed ethnographic description of how this is true. Below, I show how successful outsiders can be at appropriating a particular 'cultural tradition', in this case traditional Irish music, which is sometimes mistakenly assumed to be the same thing as 'the people' and 'the territory' (cf. Tansey 1999:211).

## II.

### Appropriation

During the Micho Russell Festival in 2003, the first act of the first night of concerts in the Community Centre was a 'band' that plays regularly in McDermott's Pub, and has recorded two albums. One of the members introduced everyone in the band after their first set, and when she introduced one particular man, she said with a smile, "He's really the only *true* local among us!" In fact, he was one of the only truly local musicians who regularly plays in the paid pub sessions in Doolin. Most of the paid musicians in the village are, in fact, *blow-ins*. At first glance then, there is a deep irony at the heart of Doolin's traditional music scene: it is predominantly *blow-ins* who are playing *local* traditional Irish music in *paid-for* sessions. Given the overt tensions that can be created in the political and economic arenas in the village (see chapter 6), one would expect that this appropriation of the local music scene by incomers, arguably the *raison d'être* of the local tourist economy, would cause even more severe tension. However, what is noticeable is the *lack* of tension. How can this be true? I would argue that there are three complex, interrelated reasons.

The first reason has to do with the *adoptability* of the local music. Common sense dictates that in a session context, other musicians (and the audience members) will for the most part care less about where a person is from than whether or not they can play. One's ability to play the music—to play *with* the other musicians, and to play *off* other musicians—becomes one's predominant identification, rather than one's status as a local, an incomer or a tourist. Ability and praxis precede role and status in the musical domain. For example, a local who plays poorly will not be the centre of attention simply because they are local. Instead, the tourist or incomer who plays beautifully in that same session will garner the attention of the audience and the other musicians.

More importantly, there are two distinct types of knowledge that can be adopted by incomers that allow them to successfully enter into the local musical domain. There is an oral tradition surrounding the music locally. This folk history about local musicians who have come and gone over the years can be learned and inherited by the incomer. The tune that a blow-in musician learns may have a local history, too. This is contrasted to what I would call the *aural* tradition of the music, which is to say that there is a local 'sound' to the tunes, an aural character, that can be embodied, put into practice and again, propagated. The aural tradition includes not only the local version(s) of tunes (as in, "This is the version Micho used to play"), but the very subtle decorations that fill the spaces in between the notes of that local version. Both the oral and the aural traditions can be learnt by the incoming musician.

The second reason, I would suggest, is that there are two distinct and seemingly contradictory discourses concerning traditional Irish music. One is exclusively local while the other is inclusively extralocal. The first argues that the local variants of the music are inherently tied to the land. This relates more generally to the metaphor of rootedness of local people, explored in chapter 6. The second discourse, which is often simply given the shortened moniker, *The Tradition*, relates to Irish music in general in all of its permutations, and in all of its global contexts. While local variants of Irish dance music are conceived as having deep roots into the very landscape, *The Tradition* is generally conceived as being mobile, transportable and multinational, what could be called a *musiscape*, to adapt Appadurai's metaphor of cultural flows across 'landscapes' (1996:33)<sup>1</sup>.

Thirdly, during the rare moments of 'good craic' that emerge during the performance of the music in pub sessions, issues of identity, history and even one's subjectivity become moot. These are moments that all musicians strive for when playing and all audiences long for when listening. 'Good craic' is a multifaceted, complex concept, and even the word *craic* itself is highly polysemous. In relation to the music though, it can refer to those particular disembodied moments during the session when people 'lose themselves' in the music. In these moments, social status becomes, not just secondary, but meaningless.

All of these factors are inherently intertwined in the direct experience of musical performance. None of them can really be extrapolated from the other when musicians sit down to play a few tunes. So, much of the following discussion circles around itself and travels over the same terrain. But we should not falsify reality by making a complex ethnographic milieu sound simple. To do so would "have the culture reduced to formula" (Glassie 1995[1982]:14).

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief reference to the Tradition as a kind of *mediascape* or an *ethnoscape*, see Taylor (2003:280-281).

### III.

#### **Adoptability**

In a concert setting, the line of demarcation between the performers and the audience is clear-cut. They face one another. This border is policed by the physical staging of concerts, microphones, and the physical orientation of the musicians. Moreover, the focus of attention is clearly split along this border. The musicians' focus is on the audience, and the audience's focus is on the musicians.

Sessions are very different. Sessions are of course inherently musical events, but they are to the same extent social events. In a 'pure' session setting<sup>2</sup>, musicians sit in a circle around a designated table facing one another. In other words, session musicians actually have their backs to the audience. The musicians are physically oriented towards the other musicians, in other words, inwardly. This is not to say that the audience is unnecessary or unimportant. This is not a 'snub' to any listeners at the periphery of the musicians' circle. In a pub, many musicians told me, one couldn't 'really' have a proper session without an audience of some sort. As I showed in chapter 7, there is a necessary interaction between the musicians and the audience. Unlike a concert setting however, this is not a one-way interaction from stage to audience. It is a porous one. While there is a clear physical borderland between the session and the audience—i.e., the musicians' backs—the social border is much less patrolled. The musicians and audience perform to each other across this border. Conversation and jokes are passed back and forth from musician to listener and from listener to musician in between sets. Occasionally audience members come up to join the session to sing a song, and musicians may drop out of the session circle in order to have a conversation with someone in the audience. On quiet nights with a small crowd of known friends and few or no strangers around, the border between the audience and the musicians is very porous indeed. Conversely, on crowded nights, this borderland can become more distinct as the audience, full of strangers, gets louder and the musicians need to close down the borders a bit and simply 'perform', but more on this later.

In a concert setting, conversation between sets of music is kept to a minimum and generally has a subdued, functional role. In contrast, long periods of chat ensue in a session after a set of tunes is played. Rounds of drinks are bought during these interludes, cigarettes are smoked, and chat bubbles to the surface. Unknown musicians might be introduced to each other. It is not uncommon for conversational interludes during sessions to be just as long as the

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<sup>2</sup> As opposed to the partially-staged sessions that occur at some venues.



actual sets of music. The point that I want to make here is that conversation, not just music, is an integral part of a session, one that creates a sub-cultural domain of discourse. Given the inherently social nature of a session (as opposed to the inherently performative nature of a concert), these conversational interludes are natural and expected.

There is no clear-cut pattern of conversational ritual that occurs. Conversations are often about the musicians' personal lives, but importantly, it is also during the breaks before, between and after sets that musicians talk about the music, about playing, about the audiences, about decorations, about the history of tunes, where they first heard them, who they learned them from, and how to play them. History and performative techniques are exchanged during these seemingly casual interludes. I'll give one small example.

In one recording of a session I made, Kieran (who we met briefly in chapter 6) asks if he could sit down to play a set of tunes on a whistle. Having been told to "fire away!", he starts a set. The paid musicians follow his lead as he goes into new tunes. Afterward, the other musicians, following the rules of session etiquette, thank him for the tunes with a "Good man, Kieran" and a "Lovely, Kieran". Then, one of the paid musicians says to him,

"Those second two tunes, we used to play here every night in this pub."

"Did you, yeah?", Kieran responds.

"Every night with Micho", the paid musician tells him, "Every Sunday night, and in that order—the second two, the last two." He pauses, and then says, "Drop down again in a half hour and play with us again. Every half an hour on the half hour—a tune, and a song every hour!" They all laugh.

This is all part of the oral tradition that surrounds the music locally. For the incoming musician, conversations during session provide ample opportunity to gain access to the oral tradition surrounding the music. It also provides them with a somewhat privileged inclusion into the social domain of the musical life of the village. The story of Marcel, a Frenchman who became a good friend of mine during fieldwork, is a case in point. His progression from a tourist, interested in learning a few tunes, to a blow-in, and more recently, to a paid session musician in the village was aided and abetted in no small part by his participation in this oral tradition.

As a flute-player interested in Irish music, he first went to Doolin with the intention of learning how to play a few tunes over the course of two months before he went back to France. That first summer, he took a few lessons from Christy Barry and picked up a few tunes. He practiced quite a bit while he wasn't working as a cook in one of the local pubs. He practiced with other learning musicians privately. He attended a session every single night as an

audience member for the first two months that he was in the village, 'absorbing' as much music as he could. But his skill as a player was still very preliminary. In August, after two months in Doolin, he went back to France.

For various reasons, he found himself drawn to the idea of returning to Doolin, and in December of that same year, he moved back. He rented more permanent accommodation in an old, damp cottage, and got his job back as a cook. Again, he devoted himself to learning new tunes, and he practiced his flute for hours a day in front of his coal fire to keep his fingers warm. At night, he would attend sessions but, again, always as an audience member. Marcel and I would often



Figure 8.1: Marcel practicing with a friend

meet at the pub, sip pints of Guinness or cups of tea, watch the sessions together, talk about the tunes, the musicians, and various other aspects of the music. Even though his skills were improving rapidly (well beyond my stumbling attempts at tunes), he never joined a session. He admittedly lacked the confidence to join the more seasoned musicians at the session table.

Then, when the Micho Russell Festival took place in Doolin during the last weekend of February, and musicians from all over poured into the village to play in swollen pub sessions, Marcel found that his lack of confidence suddenly disappeared. In this context, made up of strangers of his own age-group and of varying skill, Marcel suddenly felt comfortable to join in. He told me later,

I don't know. I just had to *play*. I just understand that I can play now. Like this (He snaps his fingers). I don't know. There was just lots of musicians. I just feel *better*. More comfortable with the music... Something changed. I don't know. Like you switch on a button inside you.

After this compelling experience, and after the festival weekend was over, Marcel started sitting in on sessions on a regular basis. He wouldn't necessarily play very much during these sessions early on. He was still learning. So only occasionally would the musicians play a tune that he knew. Eventually his ability to play along with particular musicians on particular nights of the week improved. More importantly, though, he was now publicly recognised as

someone who was trying to learn how to play the music. This allowed him to get to know the regular musicians better as well. He told me,

I started to know the musicians around here, so it [became] much more easy for me to sit down with them. Sometime, if they saw me in the pub they [would] ask me if I [brought] the flute and, "Come sit with us."

Do you know?

Of course, he was socially included in the chat during sessions and also naturally began to enter into general conversations with the resident musicians outside of the musical context. Whether conscious of it or not, he began to learn the largely unspoken internal 'rules' of session social behaviour as well—things like: who the alpha musicians were in various sessions, when it was or was not appropriate to join in, and what subtle influences can lead to a good session or ruin one. Eventually, he was asked to start off a set of tunes now and again.

Some established musicians are particularly keen to get learning musicians participating in the sessions, and are willing to teach eager learners whatever they want to know. During sessions, Marcel learned very quickly. Sometimes, I would see him at the periphery of the session circle, deep in conversation with another flute-player who was instructing him on particular decorative techniques. Sometimes, these conversations with other willing musicians would go on for an hour after the session finished up. Session chat might be about anything, but for Marcel the chat was just as educational as playing along during the sets themselves.

As his skill improved, and as his confidence increased, he participated more and more in the village's sessions until he had become a regular face at the musicians' table. This inclusion greatly enriched his playing, not only because he was listening more intently, and playing along with the musicians in the actual context of a session (instead of playing to a recording of one), but also because he was able to chat with other musicians about the music. Marcel quickly made good friends amongst the village's musicians, not because this is somehow an exclusive sub-community, but simply because they now shared a common language, a common discourse.

After he started to sit in on sessions, Marcel improved very rapidly. Only four months later, he was approached by the owner of a local restaurant and asked if he would like to have a gig there once a week. For a standard fee, he started playing there every Monday night with another blow-in who accompanied him on guitar. Again, at first he was nervous, but within a month, he was confidently able to play a full three hour session. Other musicians would join

him to play along or to sing a few songs. Within almost exactly one year, he had moved from a tourist to a blow-in musician with his own paid gig.

I want to argue here that without entering into the sessions as a more or less full participant, Marcel would never have been able to expand his skills so rapidly. The discourse that surrounds the music during sessions, the oral tradition, exponentially accelerated his learning process. The conversation that goes on during sessions is a domain of discourse that the incoming musician can enter into, and even pass on. Some of the musicians that Marcel learned from during these chats were themselves blow-ins, and were in fact, passing along the oral tradition about the music that they had inherited from others.

All of this is made easier if we consider that, as a result of the long history of sessions in Doolin, the music itself is now played with a stronger, more consistent rhythm in Doolin (Fairbairn 1992:299), and that there is a decrease in heterophonous playing (*ibid.*:306). In other words, the local music in Doolin may be easier to pick up precisely because the history of incoming musicians to the area has, in fact, changed it. While I have argued that these changes are likely to fluctuate seasonally, a more consistent rhythm and a kind of 'standardisation' of the tunes (i.e., stripped of a large degree of individual performative variation) would greatly assist a learning musician's or a newcomer's ability to join a session in Doolin.

There is another important aspect to the music that can be inherited though. When people proclaim, in conversation or in print, that traditional Irish music is "essentially oral in character" (Ó hAllmhuráin 1998:6), even in the modern world of mass-produced recordings and concert performances, they are not wrong. This 'oral character' refers to the important way in which the subtleties of the music must be heard *in situ* in order to be learned properly. Some of the aspects of the music can be discussed, disseminated, and consciously learnt, like the oral tradition that I briefly describe above. (For a small example, see track 15). Other elements of the music, the decorations, and general 'sound' of a regional style, must be heard, listened to, and absorbed over long a period of contact with local musical performance. Put simply, one must listen intently to the music as it is played in a particular place in order to gain what folklorists call 'receptive competence'. It is an aural 'distinction' that can be learned by devoted listeners and certainly by devoted musicians.

Paul, a South African fiddler, described how this aural learning became embodied in his own playing style after years of intense listening to the musicians in northwest Clare. We'd been talking about the various places that he plays music. At one time, he did a lot of busking at the Cliffs of Moher. I asked him how this context was different from playing in a session. Interestingly, he



responded by discussing the social importance, and the aural embodiment, of the music.

Well, I think of it as practice. I never practice. I get *bored* just practicing at home, especially with this music. I don't know why I can't do it. I can work on *technique*, but I find that boring too. And ah, I think once I got to a certain level, once I got a few of the 'rolls' down and a bit of the technique, I just enjoyed listening and playing, playing along with other people. And I think *personally*, the best way to do it is—yes, you can practice, but I don't see the need. I don't know if it's just me, but I *personally* learn more by just being around the music, just living here. Hearing it. It doesn't even have to be the fiddle. You know, it can be any instrument. You just pick up things, not consciously even.

I find that I'm doing stuff now that I've *never* practiced, I've *never* worked on, and I can't recall *hearing*. (Laughs). I mean, yeah, obviously I've heard it in other people, but I've never consciously *learnt* it. And I'm doing it, and I think, "Huh? Is this me doing it?" Because the more I've *been* here, the more I've learnt that it is an *oral* tradition. And the only way to learn it is by ear.

You have to learn the basics obviously. Once you get past a certain level, apart from the basics—. When you're learning the basics, you have to go through some kind of, I think, *structured* learning. You have to practice. You have *work* on techniques, and *work* on your bowing, and work on everything about it. That's just getting the instrument out of the *way*, as such. But when it gets down to the *music*, you have to learn it by ear. You have to pick it up. Whoever you're playing with.

I like the way he talks about "getting the instrument out of the way", because for me this sums up just how embodied the aural tradition is in this music. What he calls "structured learning" is the kind of musical education that occurs in classroom settings or in private lessons. A teacher provides us with a script which we read and memorise. They tell us how to deal with the timing,



Figure 8.2: A quiet winter session in Ennistymon

how to emphasise certain notes or phrases, and in the case of Irish music, they may introduce some of the decorations that can be employed in between certain notes. We take this knowledge home and practice

it. This, to couch it in the phraseology of the fiddler above, is 'working on the instrument'. Note how he distinguishes this from what he calls "the music". Only once the musician 'has the tune down', does the real, musical learning begin. One must embody the instrument, or 'get it out of the way'. Only then can one can start playing 'the music'. In other words, the musician doesn't have to think about where the fingers need to be on the fret-board or which hole to cover on the whistle. The fingers simply go there. Likewise, the notes do not have to be recalled in the mid of the player. One note simply follows the other, one tune follows the next.

The phrase, 'the music', is often distinguished from what the fiddler here calls the 'structure': the tune itself, the techniques, the bowing, etc. "There's no *music* in his/her playing", the worst critique one might receive about one's playing, reveal this distinction between the notes and the embodied performance. Another commonly heard critique is that this or that musician "is simply a good technician". In other words, they can do all of the proper tricks and play fast, "but there's no *music* in that music." The 'music' here refers to the ways in which the musician has (or has not) embodied a style of playing, the very subtle ways in which they express the tune, making it their own in a sense, and the ways in which they express it to those in the social environment around them. The subtleties of rhythm, something that Irish musicians call 'lift', are a part of one's 'music', as are the ways in which the musician utilises decorations—rolls, cuts, and so forth, enhancing the standard notes of the tune. If a musician does this well, and embodies it into their playing (i.e., it's nothing that can be, strictly speaking, practiced), they might be complimented with the comment, "He's got lovely *music*." Furthermore, there's an important social element involved. One must be able to sincerely express oneself, not simply 'perform'. This goes back to the distinction between 'playing' and 'performing'. One 'plays' to express oneself and to communicate that expression to others. Playing then is about building and maintaining relationships between people through music. 'Performing' is more about technique and showing it to people than expressing oneself.

Others have attempted to describe this emotive element in Irish music, sometimes called the *nya*<sup>3</sup> (Larson Skye 1997:120-122), but as Paul told me, "It's an indescribable thing." He emphasised the social aspects of the 'music', the *nya*:

It goes back to what people call the *nya*. (laughs) It's the *nya*. It's an undescribable thing. It's not a solo thing. Um,

You can't play this music solo... what it's *about*, for me, is playing with other people, being *part* of a group...

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<sup>3</sup> According to Cowdery, this culture-specific term may go back to the nasal qualities of *sean-nos* singing (1990:39).

That's what people love about it: getting together with friends, chatting, drinking, watching a game of whatever on the telly, *and* playing music. It's all part of it. It's life. It's all part of your friends and people. That's the most important aspect of it. And that's what makes it, and that's why people from anywhere can play it, just as long as there's an *understanding* there. It's not the music. The music isn't important. It's sitting around having a conversation, and yeah, having a few tunes... It's a context of people... Anyone *can* learn it, but they have to be part of the group.

For me, that's why it is "folk" music. You have to have the "folk" in there!

Christy Barry compared the music of the younger generation in general to the older musicians, and argued that without 'passion', a player was simply a technician, not a musician. Christy argues that this passion, this *nya* that Paul talks about, cannot be taught. It must be heard, listened to and 'passed down'. Christy had this to say:

The players are exceptionally talented today. They're exceptionally

skilled and all that because they have access to all that: colleges and schools of music. There's all kinds of things going on, but it *still* doesn't *matter*. Our music, the *music* for what it *was*, is still not *there*.

You *can't teach* it, you see. It has to be handed down. You can do your *best* to teach it. One young lad might pick it up. Everyone will *play* it, but they won't *have* it, d'y'know? The one young fellow might have it. They might get it alright. Some young lad with enough passion might. He'd be into it, d'y'know? And he'd be as close as you'd get to it, d'y'know?

I asked,

So, let me ask then what the difference is between someone who can play all the notes and play all the tunes, but they "don't get it."? I mean, what is it they "don't get"?

He responded,

Because I play, I just listen to their skills or whatever, and I say, "OK, fine. That's nice", you know. But I still say, "Well, where's the *tune*?", d'y'know.

"Which tune are you playing, *really*?" Because "I can't relate to your tune". "Is it the same tune we're thinking about?", d'y'know!

The tunes a 'true' musician plays is full of passion, full of *nya*, full of 'music', but the tune that a 'technician' performs is simply full of notes. The aesthetics of traditional Irish music, then, include much more than the notes and techniques.

At this level, the inculcation of the 'music' is more dependent on an individual's personality and ability to express the *nya* than their social status as



a local, a blow-in, or indeed as a visiting tourist-musician. Local players certainly have an advantage since they will potentially have a lifetime's experience building up consociate relations with other resident musicians and listening to local music. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they will have the interest or the skills to play the music well or qualitatively *good* social relations with other resident musicians. This understanding of the music is difficult to achieve, and while locals may have the advantage of a lifetime of direct contact, it is certainly possible for blow-ins to enter in to local social relations, adopt the local style of playing, and come to an understanding of the *nya*, or, in the words of Paul, "what it's really *about*".

I am not alone in arguing that a local styles, local techniques, and a local understanding of 'music' in this broader sense, is something that can be learnt by the devoted blow-in musician. In a personal communication, ethnomusicologist and fiddler, Hazel Fairbairn, who herself spent much time playing in and analysing Doolin's sessions in the early 1990s, concurred with this assessment. She gave me her opinion on the matter:

My friend... who is a real old style Clare musician... also agrees that it is possible for incomers to pick up the style, in fact she says it would be almost impossible not to if you absorbed yourself and lived there for any length of time as the West Clare style is such a strong one.

Embodying the music at this level places a local style into what the philosopher John Searle would call a musician's "Local Background" which are learnable motor-neural skills, abilities, and understandings specific to particular social settings (1983:150-151). That is to say that the musician who fully immerses him/herself into a local style and becomes competent enough to 'hear' it and even embody it in their own playing has absorbed the local musical "habitus" (Bourdieu 1972:72) into the realm of the unconscious. In Bourdieu's terminology, successful musicians adopt a musical 'disposition' dictated by its "structuring structure" (*ibid.*). This is both a conscious and unconscious process. Like language, which is what Searle focuses on, the music is only fully understood when it is embodied and performed competently, and it is only performed competently when it is fully understood. In other words, the embodiment and the notional understanding of the music go hand in hand. Additionally, implied in this level of embodiment is an understanding of the freedoms and limitations of innovation within the tradition, or the processes by which the structure is structured. Since innovation is an inherent element of 'living traditions', there is a constant stretching of those creative limitations.

#### IV.

#### The Discourse of Rootedness and the Musiscape

There are two discourses that envelop traditional Irish music. First, there is a discourse which is intimately tied up with notions of locality and Irish-ness, implying that the music is like a local natural resource. It is in sharp contrast to the fact that what is often simply called *the Tradition* of Irish music, which has never been coterminous with the Isle of Ireland. The Tradition has been present and vital in England, the United States and other places since the nineteenth century (Curtis 1994:51-53), and the music in these disparate places has never been wholly disconnected. My informants in County Clare often told me for example that some of the best traditional sessions they'd played in were in Boston or New York. Influences from abroad 'came home' to Ireland, too. A common example of this is the historical trajectory of the banjo from Africa to America through the slave-trade and then over to Ireland via the Tradition. It could be argued that this understanding of the Tradition is something akin to what Appadurai classifies as a *-scape* (1996:33), in this case, a *musiscape*. In that sense, the Tradition is greater than any local place, and even the isle of Ireland itself. Somehow, despite their contradictory underpinnings, the discourse of rootedness and the discourse of the Tradition have coexisted over the years. In part, this coexistence explains the lack of tension over the appropriation of the music scene in Doolin.

It is often said that regional styles within traditional Irish music reflect the natural contours of the regional landscape from which they emerge. In the auld days, restricted mobility meant that "local styles of housebuilding were handed on, [as were] ways of farming, cures for ailments, accents and dialects... Local styles of singing and playing music are essentially part of the same vernacular tradition" (de Grae 1999:389). For example, the "disciplined wildness" of Donegal fiddling is equated with the ruggedness of the Donegal landscape (Carson 1996:169). A paper given at the now infamous *Crossroads Conference* in Dublin in 1996 was indicatively entitled "Irish Traditional Music—the melody of Ireland's soul; its (sic) evolution from the environment, land and people" (Tansey 1996:211).

Around Doolin, this discourse proclaims that the local energy of the music emerges from the confluence of the rolling green hills of Clare, the black slate of the Cliffs of Moher, the white limestone of the Burren and the relentless roll of the sea. Killilagh parish is also undercut by a rabbit-warren of caves as well which, one informant argued, gives local music a 'deep energy'. The music is also commonly said to flow from a 'wellspring of water' (Coady 1996), and is often

recalled in a language rich with the metaphors of natural resources. Not surprisingly, this metaphor of 'rootedness' in the landscape relates to the understanding of what makes a 'true local', described in chapter 6: one "who comes from the ground up". Revealed in these ideas is a profound emotional connection for some between notions of local-ness, local accents, local landscapes, local 'traditions' and local music.

County divisions are usually the starting point for determining regional styles, as in a Donegal style, Galway style or Clare style. Sub-styles within counties also exist. On the other hand, ideas of *strict* local-ness, as in a 'Doolin style' or an 'Ennistymon style', are not applied to the music. Regional styles such as the 'east Clare style' versus the 'west Clare style' are more salient markers. As a result, musicians who are from 'west Clare', no matter what town or village they originate from, are often called 'local musicians'. Additionally, it is important to note that regional styles have been fading into a larger pan-Irish style for some time now, or at the least, new musicians are able to make choices about which regional styles they prefer, utilising a 'pick-and-mix method' (Sommers Smith 2001:115).

Local-ness in the context of the music then, has a much less restrictive definition than it does when determining one's 'local' social status. Furthermore, the terms 'local', and 'blow-in' become more polysemous with regard to the music. The terms and their strict definitions tend to fold and collapse, because again, when the music is the point of discussion, it is performance and style that take precedence over a musicians' social status. As I mentioned above, the fact that almost all of Doolin's paid musicians are blow-ins does not cause a great deal of cognitive dissonance for the permanent residents of Doolin (blow-ins or locals). Admittedly, occasions do arise when people discuss the radical changes that have occurred in the area (and the nation) during the last thirty years, and the fact that the musical heritage of the place has been appropriated by blow-ins might be used as an example. Only very occasionally, people even lament this fact, especially locals who have witnessed this process of appropriation. An opposing opinion is more often proffered. Local people and the few local musicians that get paid to play in the sessions in Doolin are more likely to be impressed with a blow-in musicians' dedication and their ability to take on the local 'west Clare' style of playing. Furthermore, they often wish that more people would come to Doolin and play, like they did during the revival.

When permanent residents discuss various musicians, their status as 'blow-ins' or 'locals' may come to the fore. But the labelling of musicians as 'local' is extremely loose when talking to tourists. This is similar, but even more loose than the way in which 'blow-ins' are often called 'locals' in the company of

tourists. As I wrote in chapter 7, when tourists ask who will be playing the music, the answer is ubiquitously, “local musicians.” Partly, this is another way in which permanent residents of the village avoid getting into complex explanatory conversations with tourists. On the other hand, this is a political statement, a promotion of the local-ness of the *raison d’être* of the local tourist industry. For tourists, given the promotion of the village as a ‘mecca for local Irish music’, it can sometimes cause a great deal of cognitive dissonance and disappointment.



**Figure 8.3:** ‘World music’ instruments enter through the Tradition. (See track 7)

I would argue that the lack of cognitive dissonance is in part because of a second discourse about traditional Irish music which allows for inclusion into the local music scene. The discourse about the Tradition, which manifests itself in conversation amongst musicians as well as in print, deals with the music’s worldwide history over the last hundred years especially, and its extralocal, extranational, extracultural nature. Quinn put it this way: “Traditional Irish music, a vehicle of expression of the culture of a particular group of people, i.e. the Irish people, is an example of a ‘world music’” (1996:386). Implied in this statement is the fact that ‘the Irish people’ is not the same thing as ‘the

citizens of Ireland’, and that the music of this ‘people’, an immigrant people who have occupied a global arena for generations, is thereby global as well. Sommers Smith takes this one step further. “Ethnomusicologists”, she writes, “may once have been able to localize the practice of Irish traditional dance music to Ireland, and to immigrant communities in North America or Australia” (2001:116), but, she argues, this is no longer a possibility. “Irish traditional music has become a worldwide phenomenon—recognised, enjoyed, played, and discussed by people of widely varying backgrounds and heritages” (*ibid.*:115). It is “a multisided activity which has spread far beyond the shores of the country of its origin” (Curtis 1994:1). One small example of this is the fact that there are now CCE branches in places as far flung as Tokyo, Japan. It is what one author has called “the ITM<sup>4</sup> community” (Potts <http://www.pipers.ie/en/submission>).

<sup>4</sup> Irish traditional music

The Tradition discourse includes the instrumental dance music, the ballad tradition, the relationship between dancing and the music, and can even include other intimately related traditions of music, for example, in Scotland and America. In other words, this is a discourse of wide inclusion, rather than an exclusive discourse centring around the notion of locality. At this broad conceptual level, it may be more useful to think of the *musiscape* of the Tradition as a process as much as a 'canon' of tunes, repertoires and styles, or a delineation of instruments or contexts.

Somehow, these two very different discourses about Irish music coexist, and without contradicting one another. In fact, in practice, they are not distinguished from one another. This is because, for some, the rootedness of local music feeds the larger Tradition. Local musics, then, are the roots which have flowered and produced the seeds for the propagating spread of the Global Tradition. It is by travelling a route backwards from the Tradition and into the local that many incomers are able to enter into the musical domain of Doolin's music scene. In places like Doolin, with its long history of inclusion, it is a well-worn route. As stated above, one result of the increased traffic along that route during the last thirty years especially has been a partial loss of the regional style. This has to be taken into account of any discussion of the adoption of the music by blow-ins.

One's understanding of these discourses can enhance one's playing, imbuing a performance with deeper meaning. One becomes part of a musical history. Once the bow strikes the fiddle however, the discourses surrounding the music and one's relationship to them often become secondary issues at best. In the next section, I will explore the primacy of the performance itself.

## V.

### **The Phenomenology of the Session**

During the phenomenological, sensual, emotional, existential 'moment' of the music, one's status, social role or *any* other sort of 'identity' is at best secondary. I would take this further though, and argue that all identifications can even dissipate completely in the (admittedly infrequent) moments of perfect liminality, or what the Irish call 'good craic', that can occur in sessions. By all accounts, the music is at its best when musicians become fully embodied in it, when they no longer worry about how any external factors normatively effect the music: the socio-economic structures, the commercialisations, or issues of social status. In these moments, musicians simply play. They enter a 'zone' of what Turner has called 'flow' (1992:54). He argues that flow is a "centering of attention on a limited stimulus field" in which "the 'self' that normally acts as broker

between ego and alter becomes irrelevant" (*ibid*:54-55). These moments are admittedly rare, but according to musicians and listening connoisseurs, the satisfaction of that one 'good session' is always worth 'slogging through' forty-nine mediocre to poor sessions.

In order to understand what these moments of 'good craic' are, why they are important to musicians, and how they can inculcate blow-in musicians into the musical domain, it is worth spending some time exploring the interplay between the structure of the music and various phenomenological aspects of its performance. First, we must look at the way in which the music becomes embodied. Second, we must take a closer look at the ways in which moments of 'good craic' during sessions can bring musicians and listeners into a phenomenologically heightened state. Finally, these analyses will allow us to discuss some of the deeper ramifications of the adoption of the local music scene by blow-ins, and how the music is experienced by various listening audience members.

### **The Tune and its Embodiment**

Tunes are specific pieces of music, and although they may or may not be written down or learned from written sources, they are collections of specific notes and played in fairly specific ways. One can, in other words, play a tune wrong. Most tunes have a specific name, or in most cases, a number of names (Carson 1996:7-10). A basic melody lies at the heart of each of these tunes. Gussie O'Connor explained how important it was to play the tunes 'properly' by telling me the following story:

I used to see old men crying down there,  
playing the music,  
*absolutely* crying.  
And I remember there was two old fellows down there...  
And they were *both* great concertina players. But  
whatever mistake [the one] made, [the other] got up and threw  
the concertina down on the chair, and when he walked back in,  
he was crying. (He chuckles).

I asked, just to be sure,

What, because he was hurt that there was a mistake made?

He replied,

There was a mistake made.  
Oh, they were *really* sincere... Music was played very  
seriously. And there wouldn't be a wrong *note*.  
D'y'know?

Christy Barry explained how sacred the notes are too, when he sardonically criticised the younger generations' playing, and what he hears on a lot of today's recordings:

The whole thing has been just put away [so] that it fits in a minute on a tape or something. Cut out all the angles. Cut out all the corners.

What we want here is *speed*. What we want now is *speed*. The world is going fast now, so we got to play fast. So, we have to cut pieces of the *tune* out so that we can *cope*.

D'y'know.

And these people like to go mad. They're on drugs. They really like to make sure that nothing gets in our way. They like to go mad-fast.

Just add a treble here and there. (He imitates the sound). Just *frighten* the people a bit more and get 'em to take more drugs! D'y'know? (laughs)

In other words, there is a 'proper' way to play the tune. There are notes that must be played if one is to play the tune 'right'. Christy's critique of the younger generation is not uncommon amongst older players, especially. The rock-and-rollisation of the music includes a performative 'style' in which some younger players tear into the tunes as fast as possible. The tunes, in the opinion of some musicians, is lost in favour of the performance. Carson put the paradox this way: 'while there is no ultimate correctness in traditional music, there is wrong' (1996:11).

### **Spontaneous Premeditation**

Having said all that, in its performance, tunes are always changed within the relatively conservative structure of their melody. The performance is what is heard *in situ*, and which Benson writes, in agreement with Ingarden, "is always much more than can be indicated in the score" (2003:80). In traditional Irish music, this logic is taken to an extreme. The 'score', whatever 'score' might exist in published tune-books, is not the same as the 'tune'. The notes on a page are merely mnemonic devices for learning how to play a tune, and the playing cannot be written down because it varies constantly (Carson 1996:11).

Indeed, there are infinite performative variations of each tune. Given the discussion above, this is not to say that they are improvised. Rather, the basic melody only provides a sketchy skeleton of the tune around which the musician is able to—indeed expected to—weave his or her performance, 'decorating' the tunes with rolls, cuts, triplets, slurs, etc<sup>5</sup>. Tunes are typically repeated three or

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<sup>5</sup> 'Ornaments' or 'decorations' are specific techniques which enhance the basic notes of a tune. The decorations vary according to the instrument, depending on its physical nature. For example, a 'cut'



four times in a row when they are played, and musicians vary the tune each time it is repeated. In one version of a tune, the musician might drop one part of a 'phrase' down an octave, or play a descending line, whereas in the previous repetition, s/he played a correspondent ascending line. In actual performance, tunes are merely 'ideas' of music, not collections of notes to be literally read from a page or figuratively 'read' from a memory bank. So, the notated tunes in tune-books *refer* to something that can be heard during a performance, but the performed tune cannot, by nature, be encapsulated in a *single* written version or recording. In other words, the essentialisations of tunes in written or recorded form, and their actual performance in a session context, are absolutely two separate things.

Decorations around the basic notes of a tune are somewhat improvisational in that the musician can choose where, when, and what type of decoration is used at any given moment. However, even the type of decorations and their placement are somewhat controlled. Too much decoration, misplaced decoration, or the wrong kind of decoration is discouraged. For example, I remember one musician criticising another player once, saying that he used a decoration called 'the cut' so regularly that it was nearly impossible to discern the notes of the actual tune in his playing. One of the things that people always loved about Micho Russell's playing, too, was that he used very little decoration. Instead, his variations of the tunes were quite complex. His playing was 'great', therefore, because his music *seemed* so simple when in fact it was incredibly, though subtly, complicated. Moreover, decorations are dependent on the instrument that one plays. In combination, the impromptu usage of this arsenal of decorative techniques, variations in octave usage, and even the variation created by breathing patterns or tonguing techniques for whistle and flute players, picking styles for plectrum instruments, and subtle bowing techniques for fiddle players, leads to a near infinity of modification each time a tune is played. Personal variations and 'styles'—i.e., patterns of variation—also develop. And on an even broader level, over long periods of time, complex local and regional 'styles' emerge. So, a musical work is always "riddled with *Unbestimmtheitsstellen*"—that is, places of indeterminacy" (Benson 2003:81). Traditional Irish music, I would contend, gives this empty space of indeterminacy a central seat at the musicians' table. The simple structure of tunes are simple precisely because there is such an emphasis on decorating the spaces between the notes.

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is essentially when one emphasises a note by starting off on a harmonic note. 'Cutting' the note D involves playing an A first but as briefly as possible in a kind of 'twitching' movement. On a tin whistle for instance, one merely taps the hole which would produce the A while holding onto the holes that would produce the D (Cotter 1989[1983]:23).

The point is that there is no one version of any tune. So, while there may be a kind of 'score', a set of notes that cannot be left out or avoided, the notes in between the notes so to speak, are infinitely variable. This is a difficult concept for many learning musicians to contemplate, especially if they have classical training. The emphasis in traditional Irish music performance is not on the 'score' as such, it is on the performance. This is an inherently live music, a music firmly embedded in the spontaneous chaos of the social context, and a music that thrives on 'playing' with that spontaneity.

Even the names of tunes are contestable. Much of the time, no one playing a tune will know its name, or different musicians might know the tune under different names. As Carson puts it, "the tune is not a story, but stories might lie behind the tune... the names summon up a tangled web of circumstances; they not only help to summon the tune into being, but recall other times and other places where the tune was played, and the company there might have been" (1996:8).

The ways in which tunes are put together in a 'set' can be spontaneous, and create another level of variety. During a performance, there may be a free-associational relationship between tunes as they are played. Mental images, personal memories of past musical contexts, or a subjective sense of the 'flavour' of the current 'set' might inspire the next tune. Often, particular tunes 'fit well' together, but this is a loose and subjective determination. And this 'fitness' is toyed with. Different combinations of tunes within a 'set' are often agreed upon and 'tried out' before the musicians launch into performance. Other times, when a strong alpha-musician leads a session, he or she will make immediate and spontaneous choices about which tune will come next in the set. There is a small pause in group playing as the other musicians wait to hear the first line of the new tune as it is played by the alpha-musician. Then, everyone joins in as soon as possible. Musicians who know each other may know exactly which tune will typically come next in a set because they know the musical preferences of their fellow players. "We'll play this one" [plays a few bars] "and then we'll follow it up with that other one." The other musicians know exactly what that means. Sometimes even these obscure cues are unnecessary.

All of these levels of spontaneity in Irish music are different from the 'improvisation' of jazz solos. In jazz, there are predetermined moments in an arranged piece of music for on-the-spot melodic improvisation, what Benson calls 'premeditated spontaneity' (2003:133). Instead, this is its opposite: 'spontaneous premeditation'. The tunes and the basic 'idea' of their melodies are known beforehand, but the order itself—in other words their arrangement—and the variation on the basic 'ideational' notes of the tune are improvised.

## The Music as a Conversation

Meeting a new musician presents a challenge, I was told, if they have a wide repertoire. Common musical territory must be mapped out, tunes known to all parties must be determined, and a kind of dance ensues as the points on the map are plotted. Whole towns and cities of commonly known tunes emerge from the landscape, and roads between them are drawn up. The relationships between tunes can be made by their names, or they might be freely associated in sets by the auld musicians that made them famous. They might be paired off because of the 'feel' of them.

In that sense, traditional Irish music played in a session context is very much like a conversation instead of a rehearsed performance. The metaphor of music as a kind of language is apt, and the musicians I interviewed often used this metaphor. It can be argued that the infinitely varied performance of the music itself is akin to the semantics of language, while the notes of tunes are akin to the words and sentences. The session, in this way, is seen as a whole conversation. Paul used this analogy extensively when we were talking about the 'unspoken rules' of session behaviour:

For *good* music, it's *as* important to *listen* as it is to express yourself. It's the same as a conversation, really. It's common courtesy not to speak over someone and not to *interrupt*, or barge in with your point.

It's the same with the music. You don't just arrive at a session and tear into your own tunes. You listen to what *they're* doing, and play along with what *they're* doing.

And if they *ask* you, *then* you express yourself. And most the time, they *will*. If you're sensitive and, um, a good listener as well as a good player, you *will* get asked, "give us a few reels" or "give us some tunes there", you know. And they *want* to hear you because you've been courteous to *them*.

It's all intertwined. It's—it's—like I said, it's like a *language*. It's a *conversation*.

And that's what is fun about a session. It is music, but it's just like *talking*. Like, you know, different styles, different accents, but you can still *understand* each other, and still have a good conversation if you're willing to listen and not tread on people's toes.

Musicians who used this metaphor when talking about sessions would say that of course not every 'conversation' we have is a good one. Many of them, in fact, are rather mundane. Occasionally however, we have those rare conversations that build from a beginning and grow into a discussion that enlightens, entertains, or teaches us something new. Good sessions, like good conversations, momentarily connect us with others around a particular topic, using a common language. The topic can build and grow and evolve, and although we might have different viewpoints or different rhetorical styles, we can

possibly learn something new, or entertainingly pass the time. Traditional Irish music in this case is the common language that is used, the *lingua franca* of a session. The tunes can be introduced as 'topics' and paired with other tunes to create a challenge to the other musicians. One might react to such a challenge by presenting another 'point of view' in the next set of tunes. Or, the pairing of tunes can create a kind of musical 'joke', and a 'banter' between musicians can evolve in a session. None of this needs to be addressed with actual language, and it is a 'conversation' that the listening audience is largely unaware of.

Herein lies one of the more important reasons for understanding a) the embodiment of the music, b) the relationship between the metaphor of 'rootedness' and the global Irish musiscape and c) spontaneous premeditation. A musician's linguistic or cultural background is not directly related to one's communicative ability as a musician in the session context. If a musician can creatively engage with the unfolding musical 'conversation' and embody the music by using spontaneous innovation in the form of varying decorations and the occasional polyphonous line while not extending the melody too far from its 'basic idea', then their performance of the music is deemed 'traditional' and 'authentic' even if they can only speak Japanese.

### **Perfect Embodiment and Good Craic**

Taking into account all of the ways in which the music becomes embodied in the musician, and the deeper understanding of the notion of what the music is 'really about', it is necessary to briefly discuss the notion of 'good craic'.

Craic, or crack, being a culture-bound term is largely untranslatable, but it is often loosely rendered to mean 'entertainment', 'fun', or simply "having a good time" (McManus 2000). Carson simply defines it as "social exchange" (1996:71). Later, he relates it to the term 'crack' as it is commonly used in English, as in, 'cracking a joke', or 'cracking up' when someone tells a joke (*ibid.*:83-84). Glassie describes "the crack" as a moment of witty "engagement and excitement" in conversation (1982 [1995]:36). Peace probably gets closer when he describes it as "an intensity of shared emotion and well-being... generated in specific places already endowed with a strong sense of belonging" (2001:98). It is a highly polysemous term, and arrives in conversation at many points. When meeting someone on the street, one is commonly greeted with, "What's the craic?", which means "what's going on?" Alternatively, one might ask "Is there any craic?" One can also "have the craic" with others when there's good conversation. A person's character might also be assessed in terms of the craic as well. "She's great craic altogether" is a high complement indeed.

So, the craic is by no means just applicable to the music. In fact, at its core, it describes the quality of general social relations. The distinction between the craic and the music is furthered by assessments of a night in the pub, like "There was loads of music, but no craic". Fairbairn makes this distinction as well. She writes that it is "not restricted to describing musical events but it is a general term for any form of enjoyable discourse" (1992:30) but since it is often applied to the music, it "indicates the importance of the social aspect of music-making" (*ibid.*). Peace describes the inchoate nature of this energetic social milieu:

The craic is unpredictable, though, in that it is difficult to anticipate why certain events generate this pronounced sense of collective well-being when others do not... At the end of the evening, the craic has been enjoyed by all, but no one can say precisely why in this particular bar on this particular night. There is always a measure of the inestimable which inheres in the craic, and that is its attraction. What remains incontestable is that the performance is collectively produced (Peace 2001:98).

There really is no such thing as 'bad craic'. By the nature of the term, it is either present or absent. However, there is a distinction between merely "having the craic" and "good craic." When the evening's conversation is good in the pub and the music is even better, when the drinks are flowing, and when friendly teasing and bursts of laughter permeate the night, one might be able to say "the craic was mighty!"<sup>6</sup> These uncommonly good nights are the ones that people talk about for weeks afterwards. On those rare nights when the mood in the crowd is 'just right', when the musicians, for whatever reason, have more energy than normal, when people generally feel carefree enough to 'have a good time', this "intensity of shared emotion and well-being" (Peace 2001:98) can emerge.

Since the craic is a qualitative assessment of a social environment, and since the sessions are inherently social, sessions can also exude good craic. Good rapport between musicians is a baseline for a good session. This may mean that they've played together many times before, but not necessarily. It simply means that the musicians have a 'good feeling' from one another, musically and socially. Beyond that, it becomes difficult to determine why one particular session in fifty is 'good' whereas the next forty-nine nights are mediocre or 'bad'. Sessions are inherently risky ventures, and that's what makes them exciting. Even in Doolin, with its socio-economic structure of weekly paid sessions and the teeming crowds of tourists in the summertime, once sitting at the musicians' table, anything could happen. It is this element of spontaneous risk that allows for excitement and 'good craic' to enter into the picture. Others have discussed

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<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, some people substitute the word "mighty" for "ninety".

these moments of piercing awareness in other contexts. Turner describes these moments as imbued with a "sense of harmony with the universe... and the whole planet is felt to be in *communitas*" (1986:43). He cites d'Aquili and Laughlin who describe the 'heightened vitality' one may experience during a ritual in which "a brief ecstatic state and sense of union (often lasting only a few seconds)... may often be described as no more than a shiver running down the back at a certain point" (1979:177, as cited in Turner 1986:43).

Unusual, challenging situations present us with risk. Risk makes us take chances, and sometimes, the more risk that is involved, the more exciting the outcome becomes when it is successfully taken on. By their nature, sessions are meant to be spontaneous and risky. Musicians are led into a liminally creative state of being which, given the right mood in the room on the right day, may lead to a genuine sense of *communitas* and an exceptional performance, one that is deemed by all to be 'good craic' and therefore 'authentic'. For example, one February day, an unusual event occurred which brought together a unique combination of people and led to 'good craic'. A professional photographer from New York on holiday passed through Doolin. He was so impressed with the session he saw one Monday night, that he asked Christy Barry if he could organise a session in the afternoon later that week to photograph. Since January is such a quiet month, the musicians that Christy asked to join him for this one-off, unpaid session were glad to show up. It was a collection of musicians that are well-known around northwest Clare, but had never played together all at once. Again, it was a unique musical opportunity. (See track 4).

The photographer and his wife arranged the tables for a specific 'look', and when everyone arrived, they ordered extra pints of Guinness to dot the tables (despite the fact that only a few of the musicians actually drank Guinness). While the musicians did what they do, the photographer moved around them with multiple cameras, shooting the scene. In between sets, he reloaded. He also 'directed' the scene in various ways. He asked one musician about half-an-hour into the session to pretend to be talking on his mobile phone to, presumably, juxtapose the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. The musician reluctantly complied, but was clearly embarrassed. Everyone else found this amusing because in reality it would be extremely rude behaviour. For a few shots, he asked a number of us to sit close to the musicians, creating an 'audience' for the camera. Later, he photographed the scene with no alcohol in it; and then again with just pints of Guinness. In other words, it was a visually contrived scene.

A good crowd of Doolinites attended since it was such a nice way to pass a cold, rainy winter's day. There was a good atmosphere in the room. Jokes and conversation peppered the afternoon. The musicians, not having played with

each other in this combination, were energised after a few sets. Every one of them described it independently as a 'good session', or a 'mighty session', or 'good craic' during the weeks that followed. Indeed, despite the irony of it all, this completely manufactured session, created for the sole purpose of visually consuming it, was full of great music. Once in the room and tuned up, the reasons for coming together mattered less than the tunes themselves. Since Christy had asked this particularly unusual collection of quality musicians to play, it provided an exciting opportunity for 'good craic'. Another part of the explanation that people gave me for why it was so good on that particular day was that the environment, although a 'complete set-up', was so nice. The photographer was professional, and yet warm and friendly. He put everyone at ease, and even his attempts at 'directing' the 'scene' didn't get in the way of the music-making. So, it was risky and exciting, but it was also comfortable and fun. To me, it was an overt example of how the music itself becomes more important than the touristic structures that have ossified around it.

My point is that 'good craic', while elusive, momentary, and created by unknown ingredients, emerges from the risk of spontaneity and indeterminacy. Unique situations, like festivals with one-time combinations of musicians and rare performances, or the cross-fertilisation between traditions, provide social environments in which musicians can take risks, sometimes with exciting results.

In the context of the session, the music can consume the musician. When one plays music and reaches the final goal of its production, this perfect liminality, this good craic, one loses a sense of oneself as a separate being. Emotion and physical sensuality briefly but totally consume reason and thought. When these rare moments of 'good craic' take over, history becomes meaningless, identity-labels become pointless distinctions, and amplification, microphones, and all other forms of commercialisation become moot. The notes of the tunes, and all other technical aspects of the music itself, to recall the quote from Paul, just 'get in the way'. Even one's sense of individuality can momentarily dissolve into the sheer energy of the moment. Colloquially, one loses one's head.

Instruments and their musicians become extensions of each other during performance. A flute is no longer a tool. It is a physical extension of breath. Fingers are conjoined with strings. One's arm and one's bow collectively saw out the notes on the fiddle. The body does not control the instrument, the emergent tune controls the musician-instrument. The tune itself, becomes combined with the physicality of the producer, and further, the musician can become so involved in the *collective* production of the music that, through the thread of the tune which becomes real, visceral, actual, and felt, not just heard, the individuals



become indistinguishable from one another. It's why musicians in many contexts close their eyes: they want the social-musical collectivity, the phenomenological moment of physical and aural connection to consume them whole, without distraction. It is a meditative musical moment.

## VI.

### Conclusions

In this chapter, I argue that the nature of traditional Irish music allows for its appropriation by non-locals in various, built-in ways. First, the music is adoptable. This is possible because a keen outsider can, over time, enter into the oral tradition of a local music, and after listening intently to a local style for many years, they can also begin to hear its aural tradition. Both the oral and aural traditions can be embodied and passed on by the blow-in.

Secondly, there are two major discourses about this music, seemingly contradictory but actually compatible. A discourse of rootedness argues that traditional music springs from, and interacts with, the variances of the local landscape much the same way that 'truly' local people do. In other words the music is rooted in physical places. The other discourse, one that is often called simply the Tradition by musicians, is a musiscape. While necessarily springing from multiple rooted musical styles, the musiscape is free from the constraints of time and space. It is transportable, changeable and global. It is an ocean of music fed by a multitude of local rivers of sound. Incomers can travel via the Tradition, upriver as it were, into a local style or music scene. Likewise, a musician may travel from one locally rooted musical space through the musiscape of the Tradition and into second local tradition.

These are two different, but both important, notions of 'community'. One is a local community, set in space and time, and with intricate consociate social relationships in and out of the music. The other is a 'public', a community of fellows, of contemporaries, one that dislodges the music from spatio-temporality. One can belong to the latter without belonging to the former, but the reverse is not true. Movement between and within these 'communities' is fluid.

Finally, I argue that in its embodied performance, one's identitification in the village as a local, a blow-in, or a musician-tourist, matters far less than one's ability to give a 'voice' to the 'conversation' of a session. Furthermore, in the phenomenological moment of the session, the music takes precedence over the musician.

The first half of this chapter, then, has been an ethnographic exposition of Hannerz's argument that 'culture', or more specifically in this case, a specific

'cultural tradition' is not coterminous with 'a people' (1996:22). As I showed in chapter 7, the traditional Irish musiscape has not only ossified in terms of its performative contexts and meaning, but it has become more and more globalized since the Revival. In other words, this Irish musical tradition has broken its banks and flooded into many different parts of the world where it is listened to and played by people of very diverse cultural backgrounds. Conversely, this chapter has shown how those floodwaters have also allowed other entities including people and other musical influences to flow back to the sonic river itself to become part of its current at its very core.

In the end, perhaps the term 'appropriation' focuses too much on the actions of individual incomers. Agency and structure, as I have argued before, are aspects of each other, not separate and dichotomous things in and of themselves. Over thirty years ago, Bourdieu made great strides towards collapsing the relationship between the objective and subjective when he introduced the concept of the 'habitus', which is both the structure that shapes an individual and the individual that shapes the structure (1972:72). Not only does this chapter shows how this process works, but it provides an ethnographic example of how the habitus can be inculcated cross-culturally. Marcel's story is one example of how blow-ins have been able to move into places like Doolin and come to embody the habitus of the local music. However, herein lies the essential problem with the notion of the habitus. It is not radically different from older anthropological notions like 'culture' or 'tradition' except that habitus, like Searle's 'competence', is a property of the individual, not an imagined 'collective consciousness'. Indeed, I would argue that the notion of 'tradition' in particular is more pliable in the present context in that it need not be coterminous with a place or a group of people. A tradition, carried and changed by individuals, can spread from one group to another as individuals simultaneously adopt it and are absorbed into it. This occurs regardless of their cultural background. I understand Bourdieu's use of the term habitus to be much more rigidly associated with particular cultures in particular places, and it does not account for the kind of radical flow of people and practices illustrated in this ethnographic case.

Confronting the fact that international and domestic blow-ins have appropriated and been absorbed into the local tradition of Irish music naturally leads to this critique of the limitations Bourdieu's notion of the habitus. But we must go further and answer the question, "how is this possible?" As I illustrated in chapter 6, the incursions made by blow-ins into the economic and political domains are occasionally met with resistance, while at the same time there is a noticeable lack of tension surrounding incomers' appropriation of and absorption

into the traditional music domain. Put simply, I argue that the music is inherently different from other aspects of local social life, farming in particular. Land is a finite resource, carefully defended with conservative values about ownership. Indeed, according to one local *Garda*, most legal clashes in the county deal with bitter boundary disputes between neighbours. Comparable to Barth's analysis of Pakistani politics (1959), land-ownership, and by extrapolation the whole farming domain in northwest Clare, is a 'zero-sum game'. Political power, while more amorphous, is also seen as a limited resource and it is natural that blow-ins are met with resistance if they overstep their bounds. Predictably, most blow-ins in Doolin have obtained or established work in the tourist domain, one that has until very recently been seen as limitless. Traditional music is a cultural resource that feeds into this tourist economy, and most certainly operates under the rules of what Game Theorists like Barth would call a 'positive sum game', one in which everyone involved benefits by co-operation. Following the constant, massive sessions during the Revival era, it is hard to imagine that an upper limit, wherein music would fall under the rules of a 'zero-sum game', could even be reached. So, today, blow-ins who are successfully absorbed into the local musical tradition become cultural (and economic) assets to the community rather than competitors for limited resources.

In the next chapter, I address the question "what does all of this mean?" Perhaps more pointedly we should ask, "Is this music 'authentic'?" It's a question that tourists often asked me as a barman, albeit with a different wording. ("Is this the 'real' Irish music?", I was often asked). It is a question that lay hidden in the subtext of many of my interviews and conversations with people in northwest Clare. And it is a question that my friends in Doolin assumed I was trying to answer as a supposedly 'professional' social scientist. It is a loaded question though, one which needs some sober unpacking. What's more, authenticity is a notion that has haunted tourism studies and ethnomusicology, two disciplines that I am presently trying to tap into while grounding myself in social anthropology. While authenticity is an important concept, it is naturally ambiguous (perhaps usefully so), and as a result, a disparate array of approaches have been taken to determine the 'authenticity' of an object or a practice. I agree with Moore who argues that 'authenticity' is to be "fought for" because it is "ascribed, not inscribed" (2002:210). Therefore, it is my contention that *it all depends*. It depends on who is asking the question, in what context, and what factors they perceive to be 'traditional' or 'polluting'. The answer to the question, 'what might it mean?' then, is inherently complicated.

## Chapter Nine—Authenticity

### I.

#### A Summary

In this chapter, I want to begin drawing together the various threads that I have woven in this thesis. This is no easy task. As Kneafsey has pointed out, the interplay between traditional Irish music and tourism may be “a kind of symbiosis” which is “complicated, messy, always shifting and changing” and, she continues, “perhaps the best way to describe it is as an ‘ever-becoming’ geography of music, one which is constantly changing its contours as individuals’ musical practices and performances are woven into its thick, rough texture” (2002:358). As I have laboured to show in this thesis, this ‘musical geography’ does shift and change seasonally and over time, and the people who occupy that geography, or move through it, also change.

Summarising the big picture in Doolin, there has been an extended historical shift in many aspects of social life in Ireland generally and in Doolin particularly towards ‘globalisation’. According to Hannerz, “globalization is a matter of increasing long-distance interconnectedness, at least across national boundaries, preferably between continents as well” (1996:17). One could argue that this is a decentralising process which removes places like Doolin from the relatively ‘enclosed’ peasant socio-economy of the auld days as described by Arensberg and Kimball and into an ever-shifting global arena. This process has increased dramatically in northwest Clare, especially since the Revival.

It is important to point out, however (and this is something of a cliché in modern anthropological analyses), that society was never as ‘enclosed’ as some early anthropologists chose to represent them. This thesis highlights the global connections to local lives and shows that, while these relationships have certainly accelerated in recent times, they have always been extant. Global connections may have been fewer and slower, but they were no less important. Emigration, for example, was a dramatic and influential globalising process that featured predominantly in the auld days and even during the Revival. Traditional Irish music, too, was never coterminous with the isle of Ireland. It thrived especially in England and America before the Revival period. In other words, the global traditional Irish musiscape, described in chapter 8, has a long history. Hannerz has also been careful to argue that globalization “is not brand new... and it is notoriously uneven” in its spread throughout the world (1996:18). The present ethnographic example reveals the truth of his assertion.

So, life in northwest Clare has, in many ways, become decentralised as a result of various globalising processes. However, I have detailed the many ways in which Doolin in particular has in fact become 'centralised' as a result of the shifting slippages of history. Many aspects of life have become more structured. Folk music revivals, as others have noted, often start in urban environs in a search for the supposedly rural 'root' of the musical tradition. As elsewhere, the revitalisation of this particular music has turned 'peripheral' rural places (like Doolin) into 'the core' (Sant Cassia 2000:299). Doolin is not as much a place to be from as a place to go. This is more true now than ever as mass tourism has taken the place of the specialised 'musical pilgrimage' kind of tourism that characterised the Revival period.

What's more, the socio-musical context of the session, imported during the Revival, spread out from places like Doolin and in its own way helped spread the music further. In that sense, places like Doolin that featured prominently in the Revival acted as catalysts for a new expression of traditional Irish music. The introduction of the session as a musical context helped create a whole new social structure for the music's performance in the debilitating wake created by the elimination of the Country House Dances during the auld days and the beginnings of larger globalising influences during the Revival. Tourism, starting as a specialised 'musical pilgrimage' during the Revival and finishing as generalised 'mass tourism' subsequently, spurred on the literal build-up of Doolin, and the figurative conceptualisation of Doolin as a destination-'place'.

Today, the economy of Doolin has become dependent on tourism and the money that outsiders bring to the village, and its social structure has changed dramatically during the last thirty years to include a new population of blow-ins who have chosen to make it their home. Moreover, it is this new population of incomers that have all but appropriated the local traditional music scene, and with a large degree of success. So the social structure and the music in Doolin have both been broken down and rebuilt in new configurations. It is too simplistic to say that *here is the core* and *there is the periphery*, or that globalising processes like tourism have simply decentralised a place and eroded its authenticity. The interaction between traditional Irish music and tourism in a place like Doolin is an example of how much more complex these issues are.

In what follows, I return to the issue of 'authenticity', which was discussed in chapter 7 in relation to the notions of commodification and commercialisation. Here, I want to further my argument that 'authenticity' is a relative trope by discussing it in relation to the diversity of aural perceptions and experiences of the music in Doolin by the various actors who practice it or encounter it. However, I argue for a qualified relativity, one that takes into account the reality

that the knowledge of 'insiders' (in relation to a number of contexts and factors, listed below) affords some people a more authoritative opinion about the 'credibility' (Connell and Gibson 2003:44) of certain performances.

Simple dichotomies between staged and un-staged authenticity, popular in today's tourism literature (MacCannell 1989[1976]:91-107), and even the more recently refined approaches to this dichotomy (Edensor 2000), are too broad to deal with the finer grained complexity of determining the 'authenticity' in this context. What follows then, is not only an explication of one complex ethnographic scenario, but a critical refinement of the theoretical usage of the notion of 'authenticity'.

## II.

### **Hearing Music, Perceiving Authenticity**

The notion of 'authenticity' is a relative trope, a tangled discourse rife with personal agendas and political undertones. There are many ways of dealing with the concept here. In a broad understanding, the novice or inexperienced listener can 'feel' that they are experiencing an 'authentic' performance even if the musician playing the music or an experienced connoisseur of the music feels that it is constructed or 'inauthentic'. Precisely because the inexperienced listener has little or no basis for determining whether or not a performance is 'authentic' by other means than his or her own *inexperience*, he or she can experience authenticity in a performance determined to be 'inauthentic' by others. Does the fact that a listener is a novice preclude his or her experiences from the realm of authenticity? I would argue that it does not. I do not want to simply argue that 'it's all relative' though. Instead, it is important to recognise the fact that individuals with a closer relationship to traditional Irish music (whether they themselves are musicians or not), and to northwest Clare and its permanent residents, possess a more authoritative perception about the quality of performances there, although one that leaves significant room for discursive disagreement. Below, I untangle the concept of 'authenticity' and the various ways in which it has been utilised in the academic literature. Two related concepts are brought into play to reduce the ambiguity of the concept. I introduce the notion of 'quality', and I modify Connell and Gibson's notion of 'credibility' (2003:44).

Benson, a philosopher who has written about the phenomenology of music has argued "that an essential ingredient in having a genuine experience (*Erfahrung*) is the element of surprise: it is precisely when we do not expect something that it effects us most" (2003:118). He goes on:

[I]t is in the act of truly listening that we have a genuine experience in which we make contact with that which we hear. But, since a genuine experience is surprising and shocking, we cannot continue to experience a piece by having it performed repeatedly in the same way. It needs to be changed, not merely so that we can hear it anew but so that we can truly hear it at all (*ibid.*).

He is specifically referring to classical music here, but the notion of the 'genuine experience' being determined by a 'surprise' is applicable to the present ethnographic situation as well. Listeners who are less familiar with the ways in which traditional Irish dance music is performed than others might find a 'staged', amplified performance inclusive even of World Music and rock-and-roll genre elements a positively surprising experience, and therefore 'genuine'. But 'staged' performances (in terms of the way in which the music is somewhat prearranged by the musicians) cannot be repeated to the same audience members over and over. Over time, the repeated 'staged' performances are likely to seem less and less 'genuine'.

I have a personal experience of this. When I first entered the field, I was wholly unfamiliar with the ways in which traditional Irish music is performed *in situ* in Doolin. Like many tourists, I had previously enjoyed listening to traditional Irish music on CDs, from movie soundtracks, I'd long enjoyed 'celtic' rock bands like the Pogues and the Waterboys, and I'd seen spectacles like *Riverdance*. Unlike many tourists coming to Doolin, I had a working familiarity with the session context.

I learned over the course of the summer months to enjoy various 'groups' and combination of musicians. Without being able to articulate exactly why, I just found some of them more enjoyable than others. One pub in Doolin in particular caters to 'groups', not the more freely structured sessions led by an alpha-musician (as in "Christy Barry and Friends"). At first, I wasn't able to make this distinction, or at least I wasn't able to recognise the significance of it. One of my favourite 'groups' played on Tuesday nights at this pub, and as a novice to the scene, I loved it. I found their 'staged' performances exciting and mesmerising. They consciously used an innovative musical *modus operandi* to get the crowd 'listening', in Benson's sense of the word. For example, in the same set, they would jump from a jig (6/8 time) to a reel (4/4 time), or the other way around. They would play a beautiful slow-air, and then immediately jump into a fast set of reels<sup>1</sup>. These are in fact 'broken rules' in one sense, rules that the

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<sup>1</sup> These practices are only possible, interestingly, because of the break between the dancing and the music since the Revival period. Set dances utilise whole sets of jigs, and then they move on to whole sets of reels, but one wouldn't dance to a mixed set of jigs and reels together.



uninitiated listener would have no knowledge about. However, the 'breakage' is nonetheless understood by the novice listener, if only at an unconscious level.

As the winter set in, this was one of the weekly 'sessions' that was taken off the schedule. It wasn't started back up until springtime. I spent the winter listening to the more strictly defined 'sessions' that were played Fridays through Mondays. In fact, only one 'band' played regularly during the winter, and indeed, their 'staged' performances seemed somehow rather out of place without the huge, tourist audiences. When the group that I'd enjoyed so much the previous summer did start playing regularly again the next spring, I excitedly anticipated their first night of the summer season. I went down to the pub early and got a drink and a good seat. However, when they began to play, I was surprised at my disappointment. It seemed as though I could predict every tune they were about to play. I could calculate the 'rule-breaking' before the rules were broken, and suddenly, it wasn't exciting anymore. I'd already 'heard' this. I realised that what I thought was fairly spontaneous the season before was, in fact, fairly 'arranged excitement'. I stopped 'listening'.

At the same time, as I looked around the room, I became fascinated by how the (largely tourist audiences) found these performances just as exciting as I had the previous summer. To them, this was still new and 'surprising'. What was the essential difference between how they heard it and how my hearing had changed? I had simply acquired a bit more aural 'receptive competence' over the winter, and learned to appreciate the spontaneity of the more traditional session context. I was now able to distinguish between the actual spontaneity of a 'session' and the semi-arranged spontaneity of a 'staged' performance. It's a subtle difference to the novice listener, but an obvious one to locals or incoming enthusiasts.

Initially, this led me to condescend to these performances and the tourists who enjoyed them. But I knew intuitively that this was the wrong way to look at it. Why couldn't their experience be just as genuine as mine, even though mine had changed over the year (and presumably become more 'distinguished', I condescendingly thought to myself)? The short answer is that they are. Both experiences are just as genuine because the phenomenological experience is subjectively founded. I was simply no longer 'surprised' by the semi-arranged performances of 'groups'. But that does not mean that others couldn't find these same performances exciting and 'surprising'. Subjective experiences are the determinants of 'authenticity' at this broad level.

What's more, I would not be wrong in arguing that many people today become familiar with musical genres at the outset through strictly staged performances and spectacles. The music from *Riverdance* or a Christy Moore recording or a Waterboys record might be the extent of one's experience with Irish

music prior to seeing it played live in a pub in Doolin. I would argue that for many of these folks, an amplified, 'staged' performance with predetermined musical changes by a 'group' will even be *more* palatable than a more 'traditional' (i.e., unstaged, 'spontaneously premeditated') session where, as I often heard from tourists, "it all sounds the same." In other words, in a 'staged' performance the switch from jigs to reels, the pointed semi-arrangement of particularly placed tunes within a set, and the heavier and more conscious use of ballads to pepper the night, keeps the audience 'listening', or in the words of one B&B proprietor, "always changing to get their attention back". There's always something new and surprising, and therefore, the uninitiated listener can have an even more 'genuine' experience of the music than the more strictly defined sessions that I had grown to enjoy over the winter.

In this way, I can hardly accept the notion that they did not have an 'authentic experience' simply because they weren't able to recognise the 'performed' or semi-arranged elements of the music. Since these kinds of determinations of authenticity are phenomenologically subjective and are only later articulated, it's all too easy for us to discount others' less qualified experiences as superficial based on the subjective determinations we have formed through our own more extensive experiences. What's more, despite this band's self-conscious efforts to 'keep the audience listening', this doesn't preclude their own genuine enjoyment of the performance.

I argue here that authenticity is relative to a complex interplay between one's social status, one's subjective experiential history, and the spatial and seasonal context of one's socio-musical interaction. Furthermore, authenticity, in the context of traditional Irish music sessions, is deeply interrelated and influenced by individual's perception of 'quality'. To generalise this line of thinking a bit, the following relationships and contextual factors all contribute to an individual's perception of the quality of the music in Doolin. Each item in the following list combine to create an overall complexity of individual perception.

*One's relationship to the locale.* This includes one's social status as a mass tourist, a returning visitor with friends in the village, a domestic tourist, or a permanent resident of the locale (either a 'local' or a 'blow-in'). Consociates have an historically different qualitative relationship with the locale and its residents (including the musicians) than contemporaries.

*One's relationship to the music.* This includes one's status as a paid session musician, a non-paid musician, a learning musician, a publican, a non-musician (who may have degrees of exposure to traditional Irish music on a spectrum from no exposure to being a 'connoisseur'), a domestic tourist with exposure to, but no interest in, Irish music, or any combination or gradation thereof. Some tourists

may have only read about traditional Irish music (or that Doolin is the so-called "capital of traditional Irish music") but might never have actually heard it. Even this kind of knowledge might influence an individual's perception of quality. On the other hand, a first-time tourist with no friends in the village may be a connoisseur and have a deeper relationship to the Tradition than a local who may prefer Country Western. One's commercial relationship to the music is important as well. A person with a commercially-vested interest in the music (a paid musician, or a local businessperson with an interest in promoting the locale's 'attractions', for example) *may* be more inclined to promote a more libertarian notion of authenticity to themselves and others<sup>2</sup>.

*Seasonality.* The effect of seasonality cannot be understated. Whether one is exposed to a session during the summer months (generally attended by more mass tourists than anyone else), during the Matchmaking Festival or the Micho Russell Festival (with their specialty tourists in large numbers), during a busy Bank Holiday Weekend (dominated by large numbers of domestic tourists), or during a quieter winter session (largely amongst a small number of consociate relations) has a significant impact on anyone's experience of the music. Larger crowds, whether they are keen to hear the music (for example during the Micho Russell Festival) or not (for example during a Bank Holiday Weekend), can achieve a certain noise threshold whereby the musicians are forced to 'close off' the session and end any unnecessary interaction with the crowd. This is cited as one of major factors that typically 'ruins' a session, and is directly related to these seasonal factors.

*Context.* Here, I am referring to the particular pub in which one might experience a session. Each pub has a different 'character' dictated by the physicality of the building and its furnishings, by the personality of the publican and his/her employees, by the kind and quality of the drinks they provide, by the usage or non-usage of amplification, and the nature of the clientele. As subtle as some of these characteristics may seem, they contribute to one's experience as a musician or an audience member.

*The interaction of personalities.* This includes all of the actors involved in the session context: the musicians, the tourists, the permanent residents, the publicans and the staff. The personality of an alpha musician, for example, may dictate the interaction between the session and the audience. Some musicians are keen to include the audience in performance while others simply prefer to

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<sup>2</sup> In my first interview with one local businessman, the rapport I'd gained throughout the first forty-five minutes or so was completely lost when I asked him if he felt that the music had changed as a result of tourism. He immediately became defensive and insisted that it hadn't changed *at all*. I had clearly asked an offensive question and it effectively ended the interview. Most people are a bit more circumspect, however. Clearly, his commercial relationship to the music through the promotion of the local tourist industry coloured his perspective.

'perform'. A visiting musician may play poorly or virtuoistically and thereby 'ruin' a session. Likewise, particular audience members—regardless of their social status—may dictate the nature of the interaction. For example, even one 'disrespectful' audience-member has the ability to 'close off' a session by talking too loud near the musicians, or by trying to interact with the session too much (by talking to them too much or by attempting to play or sing inappropriately). Even more specifically, the mood of the individual musicians is often cited as a determining factor in the quality of the music, as is the overall, collective 'mood' of the crowd or the session musicians. A poor interaction between the musicians may create a 'bad feeling' and thereby a 'bad' session. Sometimes, as I indicated above, a crowd can be too raucous and noisy. On the other hand, tourist audiences especially can actually be *too* quiet during sets of tunes, making the musicians feel like they are simply 'performing'.

All of these individually complicated factors are intimately interrelated. They combine to form an overall complexity that determines an individual's perception of quality. A simple spectrum or dichotomy cannot be drawn up. Furthermore, a perception of quality and a perception of authenticity, while deeply interrelated, are not the same thing. For example, one individual might recognise the high level of quality of an amplified, staged performance by a virtuoistic musician, but perceive it as less authentic than a quiet, un-amplified session. Another person might have made the opposite determination. Likewise, tourists often view a modern element of the music like payment as an indicator of inauthenticity whereas a musician won't care. Tourists want to know that musicians perform for themselves and aren't compelled to play. This relates to the Marxist critique of the alienation of modern patterns of labour, that "labour should be a free and voluntary activity" (Wang 2000:61). For tourists, paying musicians to play sometimes equals inauthenticity, whereas for the musician, this is beside the point. The conclusion that a performance is a *quality* performance merely informs but does demand that it is an *authentic* performance. One's receptive competence of the music changes the relationship between the two notions. For an inexperienced audience member, quality may have a one-to-one relationship with authenticity ("It's good music, therefore, it's 'real' music"), whereas someone with a great deal of receptive competence might make a distinction between the two in a given performance ("I heard a lot of notes, but there was no *music*"). Likewise, one's combined relationship with any of the factors listed above will change their experience. In other words, we cannot abandon the notion of authenticity for the notion of quality, but the latter refines and feeds into an understanding of the former.

What makes all of this even more complicated is the fact that the scope of one's perception is inherently limited. Two people of similar taste and experience may perceive the same session differently given the circumstances of their interactions on any given evening. For example, one musician might take a 'night off' to drink with friends while another plays in the session, and their two perceptions of the quality of that session may be totally different given their proximity to the music on that particular evening.

This is why 'good craic' is so spontaneous, so rare and so sacred. Any number of complexly subtle influences can 'ruin' a session. Of course, 'good craic' itself is a subjective determination of quality. However, there are sessions (or moments during particular session) when things are 'flying' and it would be difficult to argue that the 'craic' is only purely subjective. Indeed, the definitions provided for the notion of 'craic' (see chapter 8) include elements of "social exchange" (Carson 1996:71), moments of "engagement and excitement" (Glassie 1982 [1995]:36), and "an intensity of shared emotion and well-being... generated in specific places already endowed with a strong sense of belonging" (Peace 2001:98). All of these definitions include intersubjective emotions which are 'shared', 'socially exchanged' and 'engage' others to create a 'strong sense of belonging'. Good craic is therefore dependent not only on the individual's relationship with the factors listed above but also on the interaction between various people in a given pub on a given night who bring their own subjective relationship with those factors into the mix.

Despite this complexity, an individual who has long-term exposure to sessions in Doolin can recognise rough patterns and make decisions about where one might, according to their own determinations of 'quality', have a higher chance of hearing a 'good session' and 'having the craic'. In other words, they can come to a determination about the 'credibility' of a performance. My point is perhaps best illustrated by a hypothetical example based on how my friend Marcel often decided where to go experience a session.

Marcel enjoys attending Christy Barry's sessions. Christy, while a virtuoso, is respected for the 'music' in his music, and is also known for being an inclusive musician who likes to create a nice social atmosphere during sessions. Marcel likes this combination of musical and personality traits. Plus, he knows Christy personally and talks to him a lot about flute-playing. In other words, since he is a blow-in who's learning how to play traditional music, his social status provides him with a relatively intimate understanding of the personality of various musicians, and a enough receptive competence to be able to make a personal determination about what he thinks is 'quality' music.

Christy might play in different venues in northwest Clare throughout the week, but Marcel may prefer one pub over the other because of its location, its atmosphere, the quality of a drink, or his relationship with the publicans, the employees or the clientele. Let us imagine that his first choice *would* be O'Connor's Pub in Doolin. It's close to where he lives and he knows the clientele and the employees rather well. However, since it is June and Marcel knows that huge crowds of tourists might create a lot of noise and drown out the music thereby 'closing off' the session, he prefers to stay away from that pub until after the tourist season. In other words, his choice is also determined by contextual and seasonal factors which are highly interrelated. So, he chooses to leave Doolin altogether and attend the session at Griffin's Pub on a Saturday night which is almost unknown amongst tourists and therefore is more likely have a smaller crowd with more receptive competence. He orders a pint of stout and settles in to enjoy the night. Even given Marcel's careful pursuit of a 'good session', there may be no craic for whatever reason. In fact, that same night there may have been a 'mighty session' at a heavily touristed pub packed to the limits with a raucous audience. You just never know. 'Quality', 'craic' and what makes a 'good' session—these are not quantifiable things. But given Marcel's understanding of the local music scene, its varying contexts, its characters and its audiences (the nature of which are highly dependent on seasonal factors), he is able to make an 'educated guess' about where he is most likely to find what he would assess as a 'quality' session.

The series of motivations for Marcel's decision are obviously complicated by his own particular social status in the locale, his consociate relationship with the permanent residents of northwest Clare, his receptive competence of the music, his understanding of the various contextual options available to him, and the nature of seasonality. We could extend this exercise to other individuals with different social statuses and different musical tastes and come up with a very different trajectory of decisions.

What all of this has to do with the notion of 'authenticity' then, depends on an individual's position in relation to all of these factors, and the way in which they perceive the music as 'traditional' or not. The 'traditional' part of traditional Irish music is too easily opposed in a simply dichotomy with 'modern' influences, and for some, any modern influence (amplification, payments for musicians, or hybridising Irish music with other musics) is seen as 'polluting'. Others view these influences more circumspectly or even celebrate them. Still others (many tourists included) do not know what formulations to make or do not care deeply. So, different people sitting around the same pub, listening to the same

performance perceive it differently because they carry with them very different relationships to the factors listed above.

In chapter 7, I highlighted the continuum of perspectives about the notion of authenticity which Wang neatly divides into four 'regions' along a spectrum. First, some researchers take a 'museum' approach (i.e., an 'objective approach') to the notion of authenticity in tourist contexts and apply it to social behaviours and traditions as well as objects (Wang 2000:47, 49). MacCannell's (1989[1976]:148) and Greenwood's (1989[1977]:179) early work on tourism are examples. Various authors have pointed out the simplicity of this conflation of experiences, objects and traditions (Greenwood *ibid.*, Selwyn 1996, Wang 2000:48, and in the specific context of 'living histories' see Handler and Saxton 1988:243). On the other extreme end of the spectrum, a postmodern, deconstructionist perspective argues that any notion of authenticity must be abandoned altogether (Wang 2000:54).

I reject both simplistic extremes. No model, test, or dating-technique could properly 'authenticate' something like a tune. New tunes are added to a repertoire and old ones are taken out. More to the point, the craic is not dependent on the antique origins of a tune, and remains immeasurable. For tunes to be 'traditional', even if they are new compositions, a particular musical aesthetic must be present in the structure, although the borders around that aesthetic are constantly being challenged, and indeed, necessarily so. But strict boundaries and definitions are required for the objectivist stance to authenticity. On the other hand, to say that a tune is absolutely dependent upon one's aesthetic perception of it is equally imbalanced. This postmodernist stance, taken to its illogical extreme would argue that any discussion we might have about a tune would be inherently ethnocentric because even our classification of a tune *as a tune* is imposing our *etic*, (i.e., classically trained) aesthetic standards on it (Nercessian 2002:14-16). In other words, for the postmodernist, perception precedes existence. However, just because I may have a different perception of a tune than a musician 'steeped in the tradition', and both our perceptions might be radically different to that of a tourist who's never heard the music before, does not mean that the tune does not exist (cf. *ibid.* for a lengthy analysis).

As an alternative to the postmodern or objectivist extremes, some researchers have argued for a socially constructed notion of authenticity, a negotiable set of meanings applied to objects or behaviours by their producers and their consumers (Wang 2000:51-54, Stokes 1994, Bruner 1994). Wang refines this approach by proposing the notion of "existential authenticity" (*ibid.*:56). The basic premise of existentialism (as opposed to the postmodernist stance outlined above) is that 'existence precedes essence'. Wang argues that the



postmodernist deconstruction "implicitly paves the way for defining an existential authenticity as an alternative authentic experience in tourism, despite the fact that postmodernists themselves refuse to explore this possibility" (*ibid.*:56). A great deal of my argument in this chapter in fact feeds into her contention that "tourists are preoccupied with an *existential state of Being*, activated by certain touristic pursuits" (*ibid.*:57 emphasis in original) which, "is to be subjectively or intersubjectively experienced as the process of tourism unfolds" (*ibid.*). To reconsider an example used above, a tourist can be 'surprised' by a premeditated, staged performance simply because they enter into an intersubjective existential state of Being which taps into feelings of nostalgia or romanticism, and therefore perceive it as authentic. Some might argue that this kind of authenticity is merely a fantasy. Wang does not disagree, but suggests that instead "such a fantasy is a real one—it is a fantastic feeling, a subjective (or intersubjective) feeling, which is real and accessible to the tourist" (*ibid.*:59).

So a tourist can have an authentic experience even if other people in the same room with a very different relationship to the factors listed above feel differently. This relativist stance to authenticity is highly useful in relation to the way so many different people perceive and experience the same session. But that does not mean that all performances are therefore the same. Common sense dictates that those with a more intimate relationship with the music have a more informed opinion about it. Those who have little or no knowledge about the music may conflate the place and the music, thus conflating their 'romantic gaze' (Urry 2002:43) with their perception of the quality of the music. In other words, for some tourists, hearing traditional Irish music in Ireland is enough to conclude that it is authentic. Conversely, those with a deeper relationship with the music (musicians or listeners) recognise the fact that the craic and the quality of the music itself (whether it is performed by locals or not, in Ireland or not) is the important factor determining its quality.

Here, I am reminded once again of Connell and Gibson's interesting distinction between the notions of 'authenticity' and 'credibility' (2003:44). They write that "[f]olk music has been 'authentic' because it endeavoured to maintain an oral tradition, yet credibility accrues to the innovative (who themselves gain 'authenticity' over time as they are recognised as the innovators of an important style) and to the skilled" (*ibid.*). Despite their dichotomy between folk and pop music, we can extend this argument and claim that authenticity is a concept that is related to the core of traditional Irish music, while credibility deals with the greyer borders of it, the spaces which require a good deal of receptive competence to assess. The recent changes in traditional music of northwest Clare are a new set of adaptations to tourism among other globalising processes, changes that

push some performances into the grey realm of 'innovative'. A credible performance is one that may be collectively assessed as 'good' by people with extensively intimate relationship with the music, whether they be permanent residents of Doolin, musicians, connoisseurs or what have you. (A tourist-connoisseur may have a more credible opinion about a performance than a local who has never been interested in the music). Furthermore, even a local musician who's grown up with the music and still plays locally is not an 'expert' on what is or is not authentic (nor would they claim to be). Discourse happens.

Importantly, this is not a conceptual return to an essentialising, objective definition of authenticity. I am in no way suggesting that there will be complete agreement about what makes up a credible performance. I am simply arguing against the notion that *everything* is relative to an individual's perception. In other words, this is a qualified relativity. At a baseline level, the notion of existential authenticity allows us to understand how a person who has very little idea about traditional Irish music may still have an authentic experience of it. For those who have a deeper relationship with the music though, the notion of credibility may be more appropriate than the notion of authenticity. Accepting that some people are more informed than others allows for discursive disagreement. At the same time, it recognises the fact that some people have a more intimate and knowledgeable relationship with the music and its performative variation, and therefore, they have the ability to make more 'credible' determinations of 'quality'.

### III.

#### Conclusions

The issue of 'authenticity' is a complex one, and as this chapter has shown, it is all too easy to create simple dichotomies between the 'real deal' and 'fakery'. While 'authenticity' remains an important issue for tourism studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and indeed local people in touristed destinations, the concept is ambiguous and needs refinement. In this chapter, I have introduced two concepts that assist this project. First, I have made the distinction between quality and authenticity. In this case, for the novice listener, quality and authenticity may become conflated, but a listener with more receptive competence may make a distinction. And while the two concepts are related, they do not necessarily depend on each other. Secondly, I borrow the term credibility from Connell and Gibson to argue against an extremely relative understanding of the notion of authenticity. In doing so, I recognise that some

people are simply more informed about the music than others, thus reinserting a level of common sense into the debates about authenticity.

By implication, I join Chaney's (2002) critical examination in this chapter of some of the more pervasive metaphors used in the tourism literature, particularly the dramaturgical notions of 'performance' and 'stagedness'. This is not so much a deconstruction or an abandoning of these metaphors as it is a reflexive engagement with them and a recognition of their limitations (*ibid.*:195).

Chaney suggests that the metaphor of front and back stages necessarily excludes tourist motivations and perceptions, and deals solely with the place as authentic or not. However, tourist perceptions of authenticity may or may not coincide with local ones about 'staging', etc. He also critiques Urry's popular notion of the 'gaze', which he argues is a sub-metaphor within the dramaturgical one (*ibid.*:196) that is limited by implication that the 'gazer' is inherently outside the 'scene' (*ibid.*:199). I agree with Chaney here, but he wants to use an only slightly more relative metaphor of 'the glance' in which the 'glancer' recognises the interactive glances of others (*ibid.*:200). To me, this is just a slight refinement of the gaze, one that doesn't go far enough. The obvious question that arises from the tourist literature about the 'gaze' and the 'glance' is, what about the other senses? Contexts and textures are inherently interrelated with texts and one's perception of them, and therefore involve all of the senses. I show here that a number of complex and inherently interrelated factors contribute to an individual's perception of the music in northwest Clare. Wang's explication of 'existential authenticity' (2000) is a more rigorous step towards clarifying the ways in which tourists perceive their experiences. Connell and Gibson's notion of credibility (2003:44) helps us reinsert common sense into the debate about authenticity by recognising that some individuals are more informed about this music than others, while also recognising the fact that discursive disagreement is also possible.

## Chapter Ten—Conclusions

This thesis is an ethnographic account of the interplay between tourism and traditional Irish music in a small village on the west coast of County Clare.

In its account, this thesis looks at the effects of two important mediums by which Doolin has become increasingly globalised in recent years—namely, through the medium of tourism and via the recent, global popularisation of traditional Irish music. Through complicated historical trajectories, they have become inseparable processes of change in the locale. This thesis tracks these developments globally but analyses their dramatic effects in this specific ethnographic situation. The local music itself has changed in various ways, the economy has been radically altered by tourism, The 'place' of Doolin has become ossified, and the very social structure of the village has changed. The thesis is, in the first instance, an ethnographic account of these changes. Secondly, it addresses the larger theoretical issues involved. The result is that the thesis is theoretically and topically eclectic, but necessarily so.

This research is relevant and timely in this era in which the processes of globalisation increasingly commercialise aspects of people's lives that were once outside the realm of marketability. Tourism is an important strain of globalisation, one that has the potential to generate a lot of income for local communities or whole nation-states. In places like rural Ireland, where there is a lack of any heavy industry (and indeed, Ireland has nearly bypassed the industrial revolution altogether), tourism has become the primary means by which local communities can generate potentially large income. In the previous pages, I have detailed the ways in which the commercialism that accompanies the growth of a tourist economy effect a particular local traditional music and social structure, and the ways in which the tradition has for the most part remained un-commodified. The village of Doolin on the west coast of the Republic of Ireland provides the ethnographic milieu for this analysis, but the comparative relevance is important for touristed destinations the world over. It is a relevant case for comparison to other touristed destinations, especially in similar places where a local tradition was, and to a large extent remains, the central feature of its draw for tourists. It is also relevant for ethnomusicologists as a comparative example of a local music scene that has undergone a revival.

Broadly speaking, tourism commercialises aspects of life that were once outside of the economic sphere, things like a landscape or a local culture, or more specifically in this case, a local strain of traditional Irish music. However, while I deal with baseline economic concerns to some extent in this thesis, in the end, it is not directly about the Irish tourist economy or even the political

economy of the music. Rather, this thesis deals with the deeper *consequences* of the increased commercialisation that accompanies the burgeoning growth of tourism. It looks at the ways in which this music has been, on the one hand, increasingly 'enclosed' (McCann 2002) or consolidated by institutions, changing performative contexts, the influence from the recording industry and rock-and-roll, and in particular, tourism. However, it also shows that these same globalising and commercial processes have spread this music across the globe. The consolidation and the expansion of the music are complementary, not contradictory processes which have significant historical roots.

Doolin as an ethnographic example is of course unique in many ways. The effects of globalisation and tourism in particular have had more impact here than many places in Ireland, but they are emblematic of larger trends in music and in tourism in Ireland generally. The very 'idea of the place' of Doolin has become consolidated by global tourism. I have endeavoured to present the historical development of these processes in such a way that gives voice to local people's understanding of events. It is clear to me that people act as agents but also as patients (Carrithers forthcoming). In other words, people are both acting and acted *upon*. Anthropology has for some time wrestled with the interplay between agency and structure, and the historical material from this ethnographic case shows the depth of interplay between these two notions.

'History' may be too strong or too literal a word for the socio-cultural backdrop that I paint especially in chapters 2 and 3. I see prefer to call it a 'remembered history' for two reasons. Firstly, I mean this quite literally. I present material from the available written resources, but complement this with local people memories of the Revival and the auld days before the dramatic globalising changes began. Secondly, a 'remembered' history is a living history, one that is recalled by living people. In Doolin, it is not merely a cliché to say that understanding history informs an understanding of modernity. I found that, in explaining current social structures and behaviours, people found it necessary to dip back into their individual (and the collective) memories. History is lived in the present and reshaped by memory.

The blow-in population has changed the social structure of the village in significant ways. I illustrate the limitations of 'belonging' for the incomer, and the various ways in which 'belonging' is limited, negotiated and enacted in the daily praxis of the lifeworld of Doolin. In the musical domain, the limitations to inclusion are far fewer than in the political or economic spheres. Indeed, the focus in a session is still primarily on the music itself rather than the 'identity' of the performers or the socio-economic relations surrounding the music. This may be less true for some during the most 'commercial' time of year: the summer

tourist season, but concerns about the loss of control over the production of the music have nothing to do with either the identity of the musicians as blow-ins or even the identity of the summertime audience which is largely made up of tourists. Any noteworthy loss of control is caused by the sheer volume generated by the audience, or by the triangle of consumption which now disallows musicians to leave 'bad' sessions. This loss of control is experienced by both local and blow-in musicians. Therefore, in the session circle, one's identity is less interesting or relevant than other factors. What's more, during performance, the music and one's ability to play it is the primary concern, not the nationality or status of the player, the internationality of the audience members, or even the difference between a paid musician and a non-paid musician.

Seasonal variation is a key element to all aspects of life in Doolin. In the wintertime, even at a pub that is 'very touristy' in the summer, a session is played largely amongst a small number of consociate relations. The difference in the interactions between the session musicians and the audience from the summer to the winter is both qualitative and quantitative.

The 'invention of tradition' became a critical theoretical line of thinking in the social sciences in the 1980s following Hobsbawn and Ranger's edited volume of the same title in 1983. The emergent concern between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' was mirrored in the ethnomusicological literature (Nettl 1983:319), and I would also argue that a fundamental assumption of early 'ballistic vision' studies on tourism was about a clash between these two notions. In his 1992 edited volume (1992a), Boissevain refined our understanding of the 'revitalisation of rituals' in Europe. In useful comparisons to the present case, the volume argues that, in response to influences such as tourism, there has been an overall decrease in religious ritual intensity in Malta and elsewhere, and a related increase in 'ludic' (or playful, entertaining) rituals (1992b:13-14). Others have countered that Boissevain's generalisations about Europe are limited though, and that other cases exist which exhibit a ritual continuity rather than a 'dying-out' and a 'reinventing' (MacClancy and Parkin 1997). Moreover, as Sant Cassia has argued, much of this literature only helped to essentialise a dialectic opposition between notions of traditional/modern, Western/non-Western (2000:281), us/other, folklore/fakelore, authentic/inauthentic. (These basic dialectics are also mirrored in the discourses amongst Irish musicians when they distinguish between 'innovators'/'purists').

The session context itself is often assumed to be some "time-honoured ancient" ritual when in fact it is a relatively recent import to Ireland (Kneafsey 2002:256), and might be considered a classic example of an 'invented tradition'. Also, the Revival of traditional Irish music might represent a classic case of a

'revitalised ritual' in Boissevain's understanding. But I want to go beyond these kinds of conclusions precisely because I believe they do reify and debase the modern expression of traditional Irish music. I even want to go beyond a conclusion that Doolin's sessions are simply a *reinvented* tradition. Instead, I think that what has happened during the last fifteen or twenty years especially, has been the *reorientation* of a tradition.

By taking a much broader view of the developmental history of traditional Irish music in this thesis, we can easily see how it has adapted to dramatic changes in the past. At Country House Dances and house céilís, this was music played for oneself and for one's neighbours. There was an functionally inward orientation. The Dance Halls Act effectively relegated the playing of traditional Irish music at Country House Dances and at Crossroads to the hinterlands, but it adapted and thrived in another context—the Dance Hall, and in a format appropriated from the big band scene—the céili band. This was no longer a music for oneself and one's consociates; rather, it was performed for the consumption of contemporaries who listened and danced to it. In other words, the orientation shifted, at least in part, to an outward consumption.

Radio, television and rock-and-roll nearly wiped out this latter context in the 1950s and 1960s, but by the late 1960s an new context, the session, emerged and thrived. Once again, a shift in meaning and function occurred. The Revival sessions, though now increasingly detached from the dancing, were again played with an inward functional orientation in that the music was obsessively played for its own sake and only secondarily for the consumption of others. The Revival brought together musical contemporaries from all over the globe, so this was an inward reorientation but largely amongst strangers with a common interest rather than amongst a close-knit community of mutual biographies.

Today, the modern features of live performances in places like Doolin are simply another adaptation, this time to the pressure incurred by tourism. And again, the orientation, at least during the tourists season, is an outward one.

The invention or importation of contexts and formats is nothing new in Irish music. The creation of the céili band was clearly an influence from the big band era in jazz, but today, céili bands have gained the legitimacy of 'authenticity'. An adaptation to rock-and-roll today (through the creation of Irish music 'bands', the usage of amplification, or the production of CDs) is not all that different. As Kneafsey has suggested, "what appears to be happening is that tourists and musicians are currently existing in a symbiotic relationship" (2003:32). Kneafsey's claim is supported by the fact that there are far more sessions in the summertime than in the wintertime. However, her assessment needs one important qualification. In performance at the local level, the music and the



tourism form a symbiotic relationship during the busy tourist season, but wintertime, the (fewer) sessions that do occur are attended largely by permanent residents. Therefore, the assessment that "if it wasn't for the tourists [the musicians] wouldn't have an audience" (Kneafsey 2003:31) would need adjustment in the context of Doolin. If it weren't for the tourists, the musicians would have a smaller audience, and would probably play fewer sessions.

Arising out of these globalising processes are very important concerns about their impact on the 'authenticity' of the commercialisation of culture. I have argued in this thesis that 'authenticity' is a relative trope, dependent at least on context, seasonality and one's subjective history. Firstly, to return to Chambers' argument about 'authenticity' and control, these modern adaptations are certainly influenced by larger, global trends in music, tourism and consumption, but the decisions to create a band, play on a stage instead of in a session, to enter into a paid relationship with a publican, or to record a CD, are entirely within the remit of the individual musician. I have shown that while there has been a dramatic increase in commercialisation surrounding the music, it has not become commodified, and that for the most part musicians in fact retain control over their music. This conceptual refinement brings a discussion of the economic impacts on local traditions in touristed destinations into sharper focus. All of these issues are brought to the fore by the fact that incomers have now all but appropriated the semi-professional traditional music scene in Doolin, and that this fact causes a noticeable lack of cognitive dissonance for the permanent residents of the village. In the end, while there has been a commercial consolidation of the music by the larger process of tourism development in Ireland, the music itself has not yet become a commodity in a strict sense.

Secondly, the appropriation of the music has very little bearing upon a local determination about the quality or authenticity of the music. For musicians and connoisseurs of the music, it is the music itself that is important. As Kneafsey observed at a session in north Mayo, despite the fact "that most of the musicians were from other places... has nothing to do with its authenticity—it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that if it's not being played by the local-born Irish, then it's fake. Ultimately, whether authenticity is endowed on an event depends on the meanings that musicians and listeners attach to it" (2002:256). The same is applicable in Doolin, and I would imagine most other contexts where the music is played. Too often, we conflate 'traditions' with 'people', and this thesis provides a strong ethnographic case to the contrary, and an analysis of how incomers are able to almost completely appropriate a local tradition with very little conflict.

As I have shown, the interplay between tourism and traditional Irish music in Doolin has altered many aspects of its performance (as well as the very

physical and social structure of the village). However, the question as to whether or not this effects the authenticity of the music is a complicated one. Authenticity is a relative trope, dependent upon social status, context, seasonality, and one's relationship to the music itself and to north Clare. One's experience of the music is determined by a complicated interplay of these factors. At the same time, this does not preclude the fact that a discursively informed opinion about the credibility of given performances can be created.

This thesis contributes to these theoretical discussions, but it is also about a unique place called Doolin at a single point in its history. It is a fluid, dynamic place, and a vibrant one. A lot has changed in Doolin during the last few decades, and no doubt it will continue to change. Hopefully however, it will always be a place where, as Dolly O'Connor said to me once, "you can have a great night for a week."

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[www.IRTRAD-L@LISTSERV.HEANET.IE](mailto:www.IRTRAD-L@LISTSERV.HEANET.IE). Online discussion list on Irish traditional music. See in particular the complete archives with search options.

[www.lahinchgolf.com](http://www.lahinchgolf.com). The website for the Lahinch golf course established in 1892.

[www.matchmakerireland.com](http://www.matchmakerireland.com). Online registration and informational site for the annual Matchmaking Festival held in Lisdoonvarna every September.

# Appendix 1: Doolin Tourist Survey, 2003

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## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of the following survey was, primarily, to assess the nature of the tourist population that visits Doolin. Who are they? How do they travel? Where do they stay? What do they do when they get here? Secondly, the survey asks a number of questions about what tourists think of the area. The information gleaned from the survey will help further an understanding of Doolin's tourist economy. It is hoped that future surveys will be carried out and that longitudinal data can be gathered as well.

This survey was written by Adam Kaul in consultation with members of the Doolin Tourism Co-operative and other members of the Doolin Community. The questionnaire was printed up, distributed and collected by Doolin Tourism Co-operative members. Surveys were distributed to Bed and Breakfasts, camp-sites, hostels and restaurants in Doolin in early June, and 159 were returned between July and August, 2003.

The following report puts the data into charts and graphs. Most of the charts and graphs include the actual data values counted from the surveys. Percentages were usually rounded up to the nearest 100<sup>th</sup> of a percentage, but with simpler data sets, they were rounded up further. A basic Microsoft Excel program was used to create the following percentages and graphs.

Commentary about each data set is included just before or just after the charts. Open-ended answers are typed out as well. Some open-ended questions are not relevant or revealing, in which case only a few representative examples are provided here. Other questions' open-ended answers are more relevant (for example, critiques of Doolin), and I provide a complete list of respondents' comments. The interpretations about the data sets are my own. Any mistakes or misunderstandings are my own as well, and I would more than welcome alternate interpretations or comments about the following information. For more information, or to comment or critique this report, please feel free to contact me any time at: [adamrkaul@yahoo.com](mailto:adamrkaul@yahoo.com)

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved for helping to make this survey a success. Everyone who laid out a questionnaire in their accommodation or restaurant made the following information possible. Without the interest and physical leg-work of the Members of the Doolin Tourism Co-Operative, this survey would never left my computer. Special thanks to Mattie & Carmel Shannon, and Mary Jo O'Connell for their suggestions early on. Special thanks to Niall Hughes for his suggestions and for doing most of the work: co-ordinating the survey's distribution and collection!

### **1. a. Biases**

As with any survey, biases in distribution and flaws in wording create a certain margin of error. The following are a few biases that are inherent in this survey.

First, question 12 asks how the visitor heard about Doolin. A category called 'The Internet' was not included, and while 8.77% of respondents wrote this in under the 'Other' category, the result would most likely have been higher had I done so. The results from the 2001 survey show that 11% heard about Doolin from the Internet. I would imagine the actual percentage today to be a bit higher still.



Second, question 16 is poorly worded. It ambiguously asks “Was it what you expected?” This was intended to be in relation to the previous question, “Have you seen a traditional Irish music session on this holiday?”. As can be expected, some respondents interpreted this to mean their whole holiday.

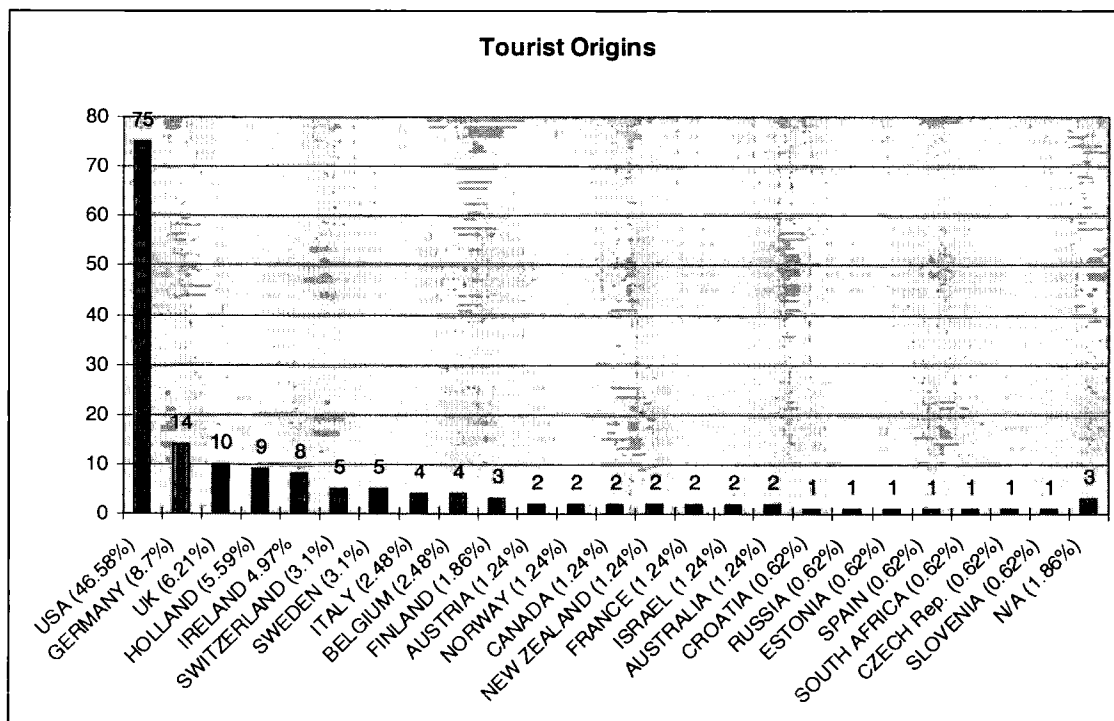
Thirdly, the distribution of this survey to B&Bs, camp-sites, hostels and area restaurants necessarily creates a bias towards tourists who stayed at least one night in Doolin. Doolin, of course, attracts a huge number of day-trippers and packaged coach tourists. While these visitors may spend less money overall in Doolin, they contribute significantly to the tourist economy. It would be interesting in future surveys to try and get results from these tourists as well. This could possibly be done in conjunction with coach-tour operators, ferry services, and surrounding communities.

Fourthly, while most of the accommodation in Doolin is made up of B&Bs, I suspect that more than 4.73% stay in Doolin’s camp-sites, more than 16.57% stay in hostels, and more than 1% stay in self-catering accommodation. These numbers are, however, much higher than those from the 2001 survey.

Finally, and most significantly, the questionnaire was written in English only. This is a serious flaw, excluding all those with limited or no English. As we know anecdotally, Doolin attracts huge numbers of international tourists. In future, surveys could be distributed in, at least, German, French and Spanish as well as English.

## 2. The Results

### Question 2: “Where are you from?”



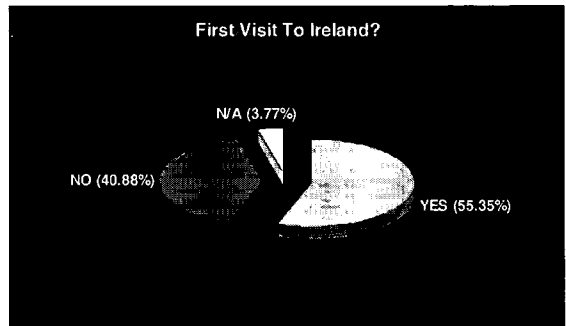
Americans are obviously the largest group of tourists to come to Doolin, according to these survey results. This corresponds to the whole Shannon Region (“National Tourism Policy Review” Shannon Development, April 2003), as well as

the results of Doolin's 2001 survey. In 2001, Americans were the most common (32%), Followed by Germans (15%), and the British (13.5%). The Irish were the fourth commonest visitor to Doolin in 2001 at 12.5%, while this year, the Dutch were more populous. Interestingly, the Dutch were 10<sup>th</sup> on the list in 2001.

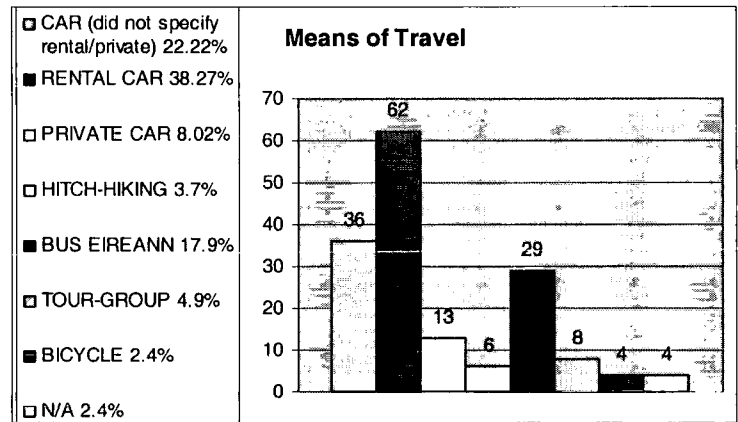
This year's survey shows a much higher percentage of Americans, and fewer tourists from other countries than in the previous survey. This is in fact counter to the national trend for the last few years. According to The CSO ([www.cso.ie/principlestats/pristat8.html](http://www.cso.ie/principlestats/pristat8.html)), tourist numbers from Great Britain—Ireland's largest market by far, and Continental tourist numbers have remained relatively steady since 2000. But visitors from The US have actually declined slightly since 2000. Obviously, the English-language bias described above is not a suitable explanation for it. The tourism industry fared poorly in general in 2003, and although Doolin remained a popular place to visit, for those who did come to Ireland, the quietude of this year's season hit Doolin, too. There are many explanations for why the season was slow this year including the war in Iraq in the early part of the year, the slowing domestic and international economies, and the increasing cost of goods and services in Ireland.

One possible explanation for the change from 2001 to the result from 2003 has to do with all of these factors. The downturn in economies, combined with the increasing expense of holidaying in Ireland may have led many tourists to travel elsewhere this year, including the Irish. On the other hand, by the summer season, the war in Iraq was well over, and American tourists, previously nervous about travelling abroad, may have resumed to relatively "normal" levels.

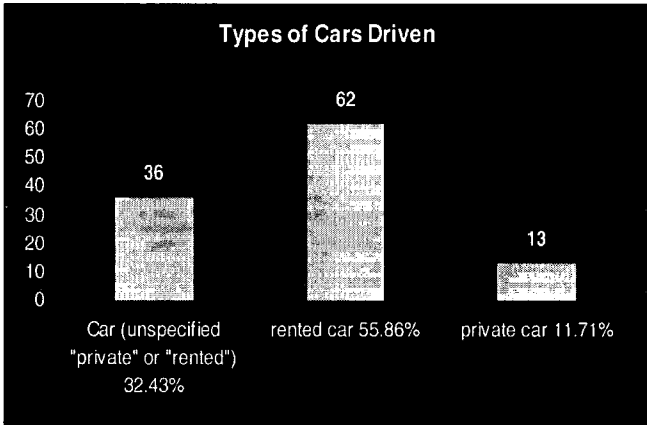
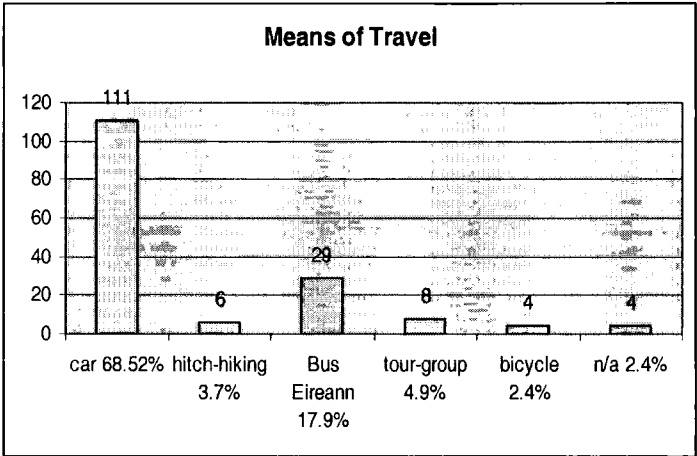
### Question 3: Is this your first visit to Ireland?



### Question 4: How are you Travelling?

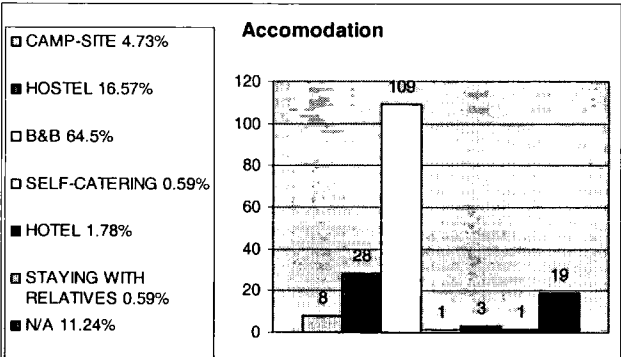


The chart above shows the “raw” results from Question 4, but the first three categories are broken down in that first graph from an answer that read as follows: “car (rental/private)”. Some respondents indicated specifically if they were driving rented or private cars, but 22.22% did not. This confuses the results a bit, so I reconfigured the data into two separate charts:



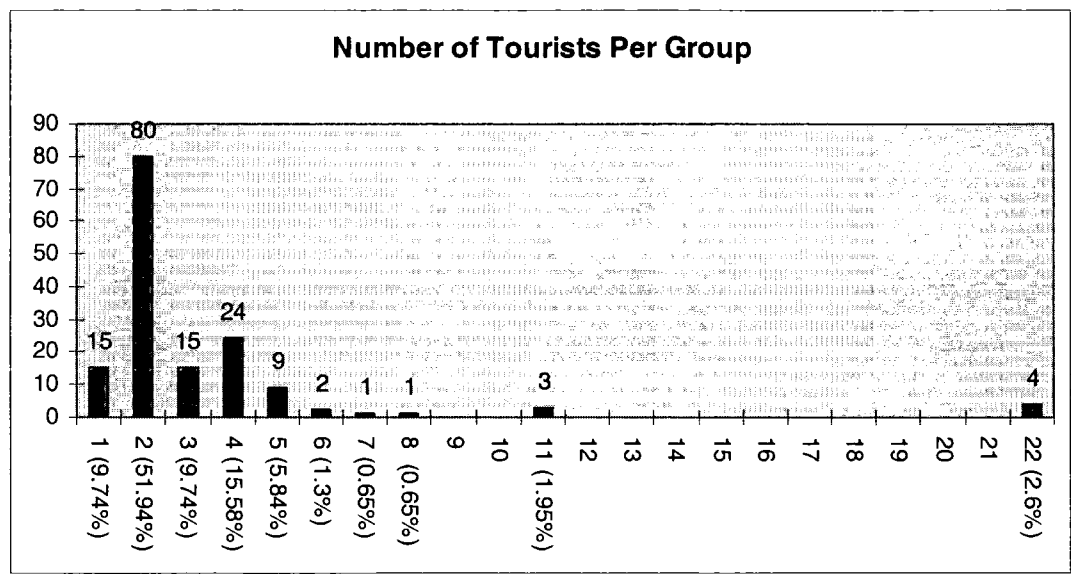
Doolin is a rural village, and it is no surprise that cars are the most common means of getting there. The fact that there are far more rented cars than private cars indicates that many of the tourists who come to Doolin fly into Ireland. Far fewer drive to Ireland via the ferries. This data possibly correlates with the high number of American tourists coming to Doolin as well.

**Question 5: Where are you staying?**



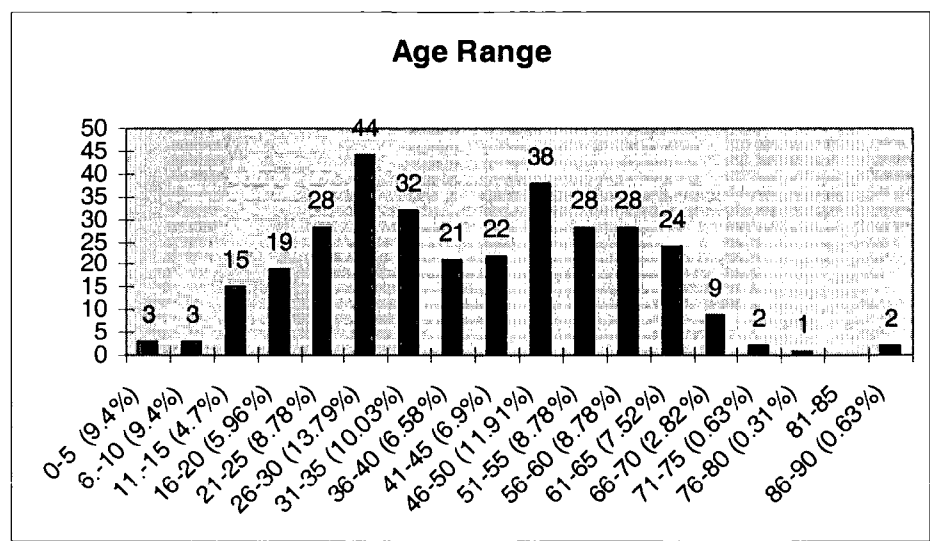
As mentioned earlier, there is more than likely a bias towards Bed and Breakfast accommodation in these results. On the other hand, B&Bs are the most common type of accommodation in Doolin.

**Question 6: How many are in your group?**



According to these survey results, couples are the most common type of group to come to Doolin (51.94%), followed by groups of four (15.58%). Some of the groups of four are most likely two couples travelling together as well. Again, it should be noted that this survey almost completely excluded day-time coach tours. Obviously, the result on the high end of the scale, had they been included, would have been far greater.

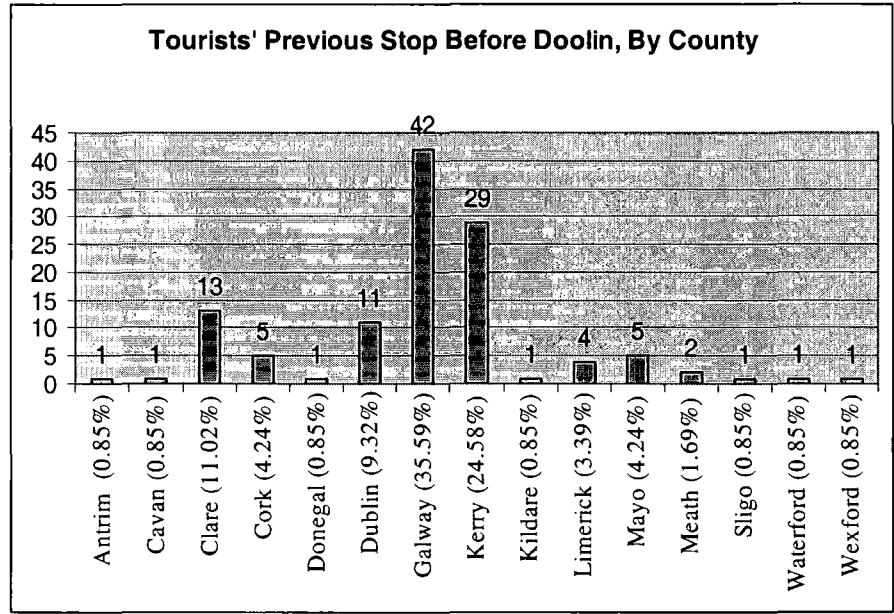
**Question 7: Ages of the people in your group?**



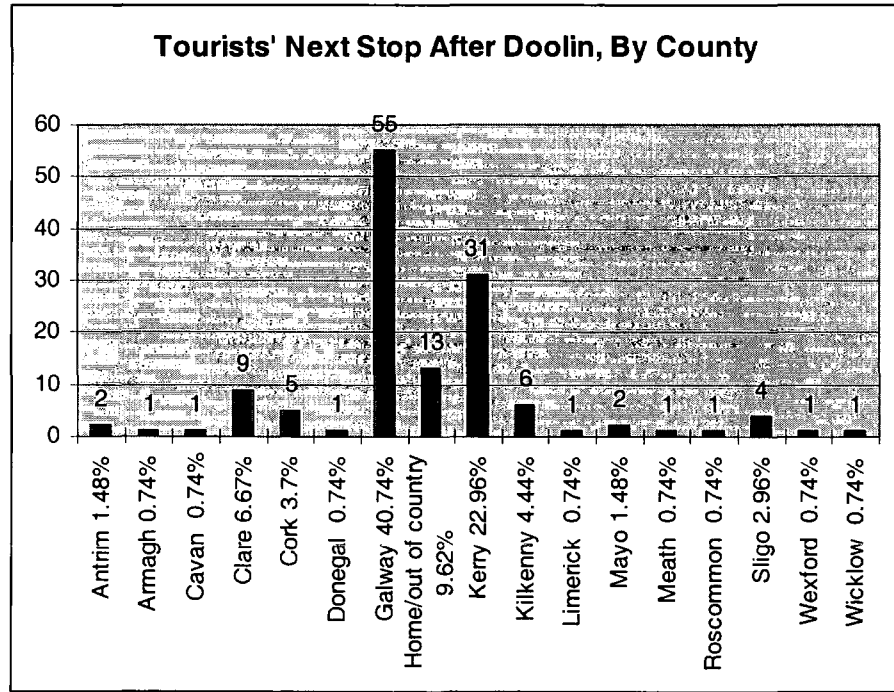
These results are interesting. There are two “peaks” in the graph—one at the 26-30 age-range, and one at the 46-50 age-range. I interpret these numbers this

way: Doolin is famous, not just for it's natural beauty, but also for it's pub culture and music. It is therefore not surprising to learn that tourists, aged 21-35 are very common. The "valley" in the graph, ages 36-45, might be because many people at this age tend to have smaller children. The second peak may occur because either couples can more comfortably travel with their now older children or could even leave them at home and travel alone. The data from Question 6, I believe, supports this assessment.

**Question 8: Where did you just come from?**

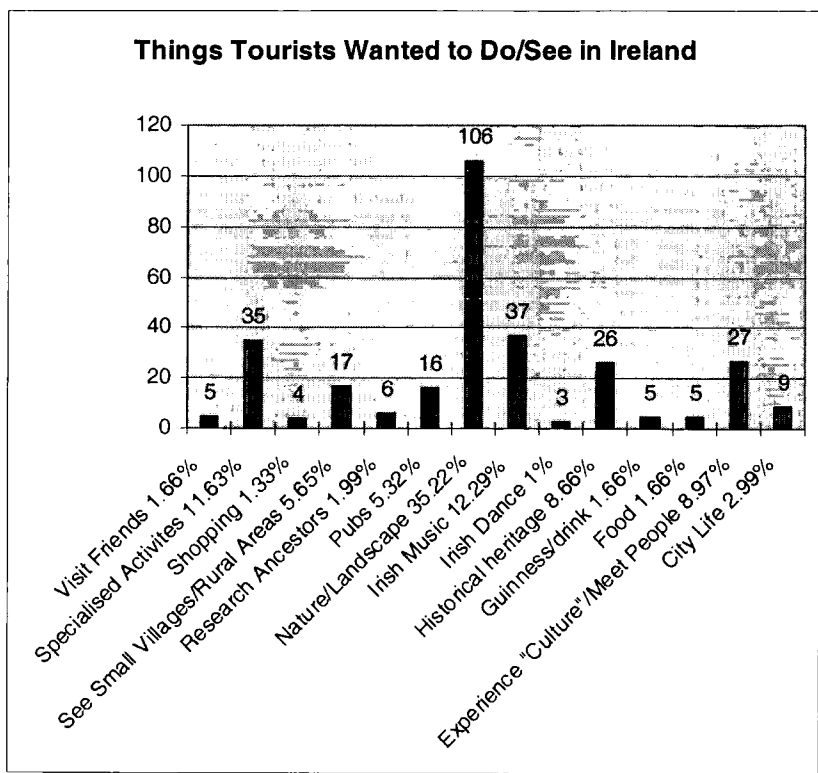


**Question 9: Where do you plan to go after you leave here?**

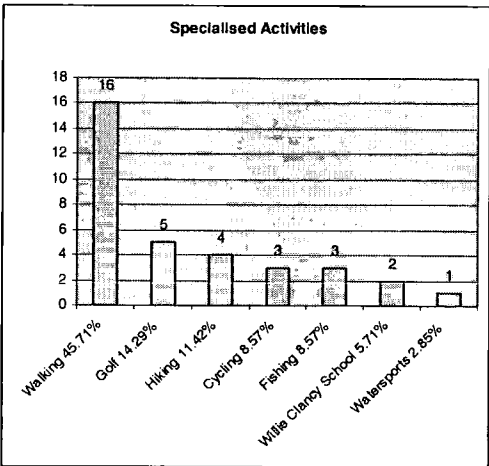


The previous two graphs make it clear that tourists most commonly follow a route that stretches north to south along the west coast, and Doolin has become one stopping point along this route. This data only confirms long-standing anecdotal knowledge.

**Question 10: What things did you want to see or do when you were planning your holiday?**



The answers for Question 10 were hand written, and I had to interpret them somewhat. For example, one answer might read “places off the beaten track”, and I would place that under the more general category “See Small Villages/Rural Areas”. Most answers fit neatly into categories this way without much interpretation. The only category that needs further explanation is “Specialised Activities”.



I'm fairly sceptical about this data set. There are far more people who come to Doolin for specialised activities than this information suggests. We know, for example, the scuba-diving and caving are also popular tourist activities in the area, but neither are represented here. If my suspicions are correct, I would harbour a guess that specialised activities are underrepresented here because many of these tourists are day-trippers who stay or live elsewhere in the region.

### Some examples of open-ended answers from Question 10:

*"Sightseeing, relax, walk around, shopping, visit historical monuments"*

*"Nature, landscapes, monuments"*

*"music, scenery"*

*"Cliffs of Moher, Blarney Castle, Dingle Peninsula, Dublin, west coast, Giant's Causeway"*

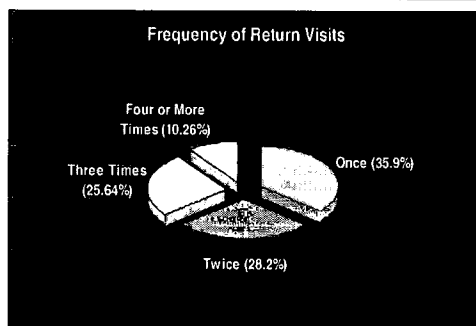
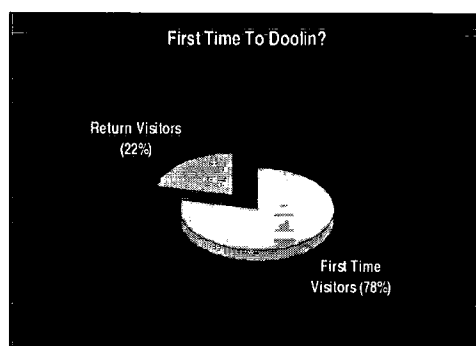
*"Scenery, towns, villages, pubs, and people"*

*"castles, cliffs, country"*

*"The Burren, the coastway, Galway, some of the Connemara, the pubs in Doolin with the music"*

*"Scenic landscape, eat good food, listen to Irish folk music, and learn of Ireland and the Irish"*

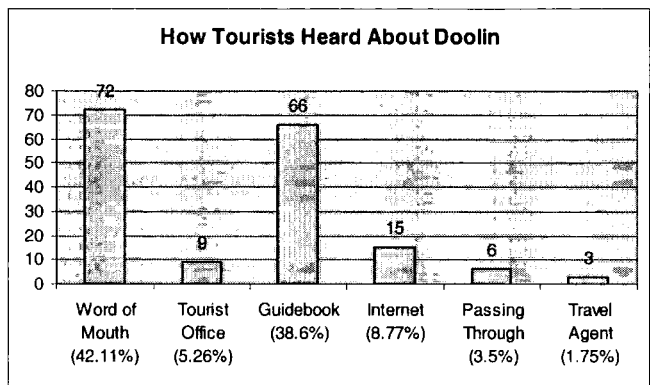
### Question 11: Is this your first time to Doolin?



The pie chart on the right shows how frequent the "Return Visitors" from the previous chart come back. 22% of visitors have been to Doolin before. It would be interesting to compare that to similar figures for other tourist destinations in

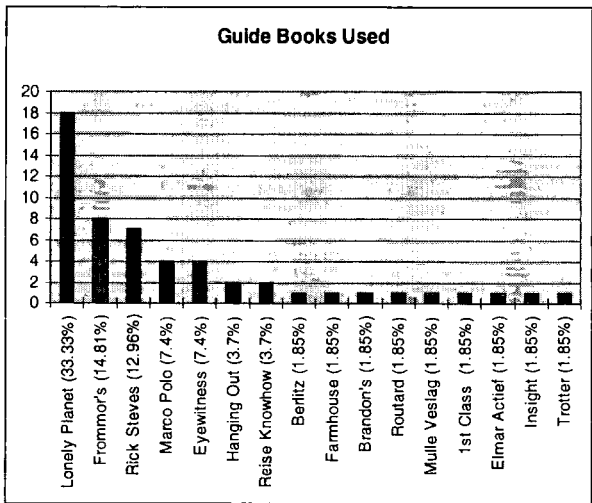
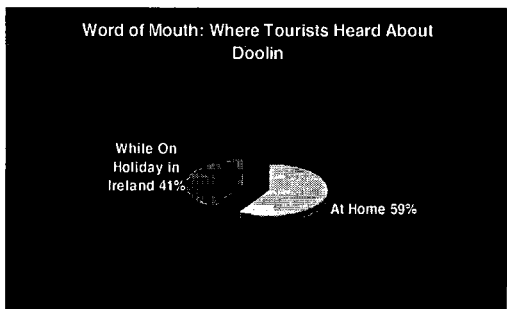
Ireland. It is clear from the second chart that people tend to return to Doolin only once, twice or three times, and far fewer tend to return more regularly.

**Question 12: How did you hear about Doolin?**



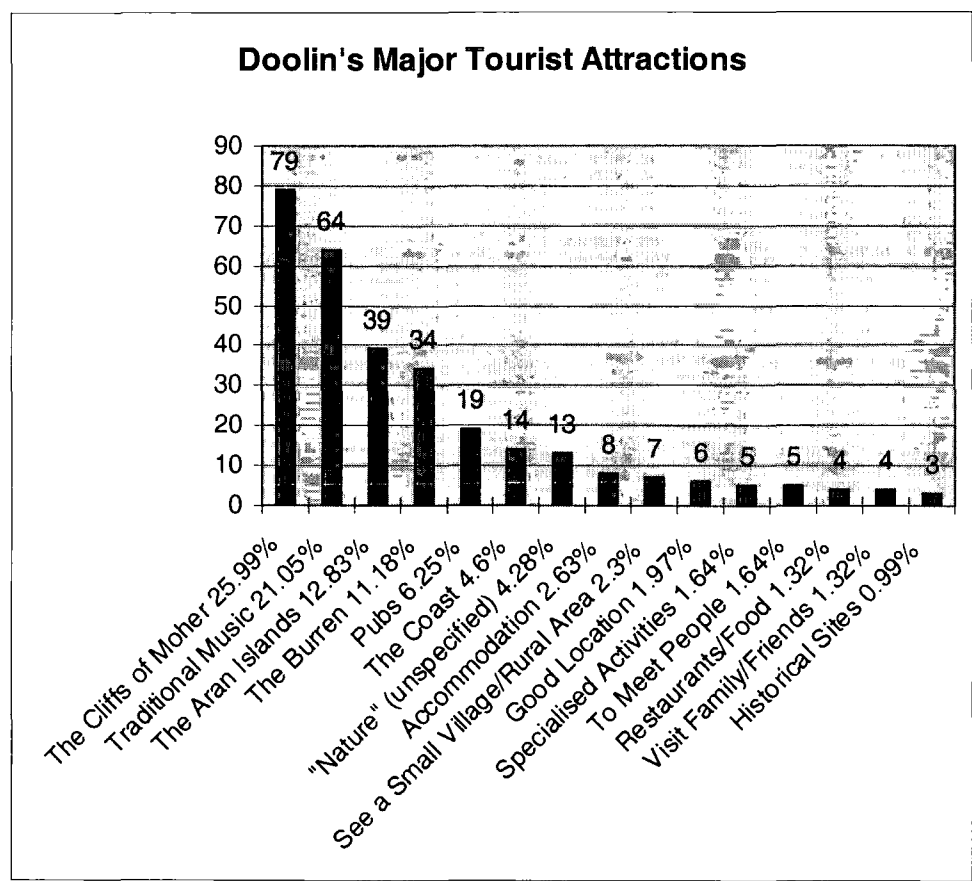
As was clear from the 2001 survey, “word of mouth” is the most common way that people hear about Doolin. This is significant because the locale’s reputation is very important for the future health of the tourist industry. The tourists’ rating of Doolin (Question 18) and their critiques (Question 19), therefore, should be looked at carefully and taken seriously.

Below are two related charts. The first details where the visitor heard about Doolin—in their home country or in Ireland. The second looks at which guide-books tourists use.





Question 13: Why did you come to Doolin? (What things did you want to do/see)?



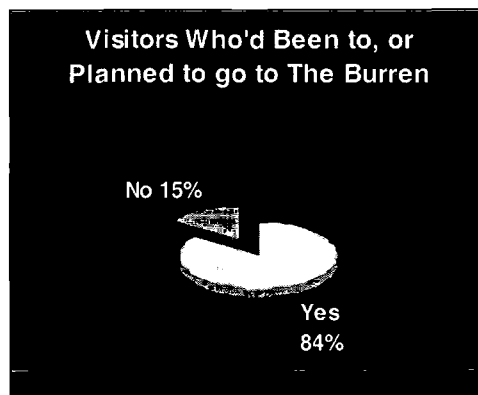
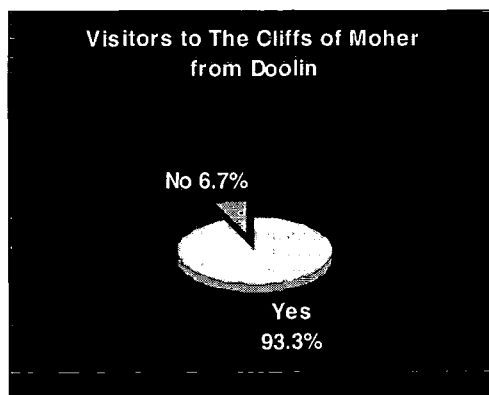
The answers to this question were open-ended, but as with Question 10, they needed very little interpretation. Most respondents put down multiple responses and each answer was tabulated separately.

**Some examples of open-ended answers from Question 13:**

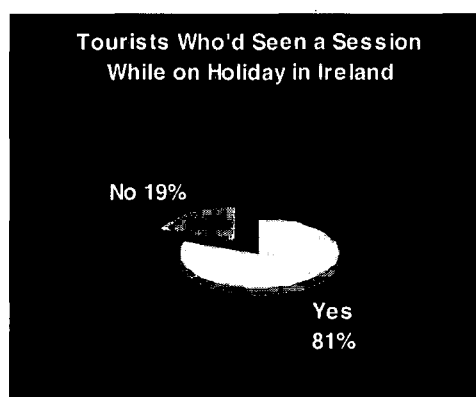
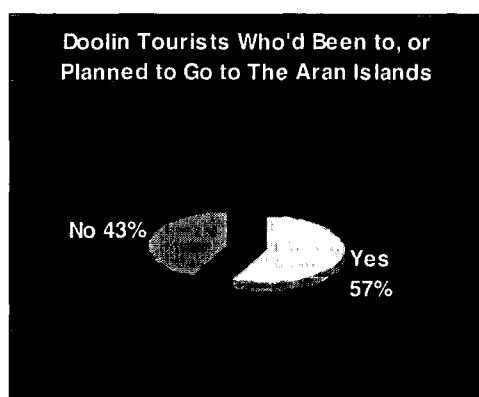
- "coastside/Aran Island/Irish music"*
- "Nice place to stay, pubs, Irish music"*
- "Visit the Aran Islands, walking, The Burren, Cliffs of moher"*
- "On the coast, jumping off point for Aran Islands, great Irish music, peaceful atmosphere"*
- "The music is world renowned. Also to take the ferry to the Arans"*
- "Proximity to Aran Islands and music at pubs"*
- "pubs, music, Cliffs of Moher"*
- "We came here to see The Cliffs and The Burren"*
- "To visit the area and to hear traditional Irish music"*

*“central for touring The Burren and The Cliffs”*

**Question 14: Have you visited, or do you plan to go visit: a) The Cliffs of Moher b) The Burren c) The Aran Islands?**



The responses to this question are not a surprise. The Cliffs, the Burren and the Islands remain very popular attractions. There is one discrepancy, however. The seeming popularity of the Burren in this question is inconsistent with how popular it seems in the open-ended answers from Question 13. One explanation might have to do with the phrasing of the question. The Burren is a large area that can be “visited” unintentionally, while the Cliffs and the Aran Islands are more specific locales that the tourist must make an attempt to go see. Since Question 14 simply asks “Have you visited The Burren?”, the 84% might include a number of unintentional visitors. Therefore, the popularity of the Burren might be more safely discerned from Question 13. One note about the Aran Islands (chart on next page): the question does not ask how the visitor got to the Islands or from where, so it cannot be assumed that 57% of Doolin’s visitors used the ferry services in Doolin.



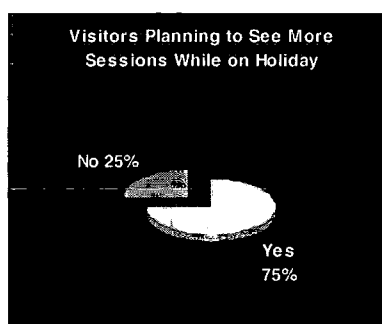
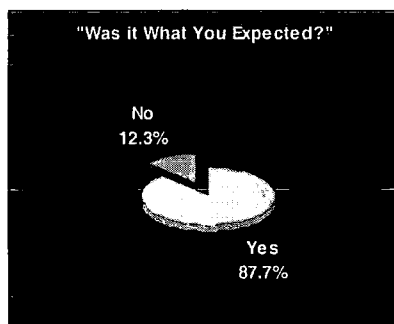
**Question 15: Have you seen a traditional Irish music session on the holiday?**

Again, this question does not indicate *where* the visitor saw a music session, so it cannot be assumed that 81% of Doolin’s visitors saw a session in Doolin. The purpose of these questions was to try and understand the tourists’ interest in

traditional Irish music, how much experience they've had with sessions, and how they react to them.

### Question 16: Was it what you expected?

Unfortunately, Question 16 is inherently flawed and should not be considered an accurate depiction of what tourists expect of a traditional session. Since the word "it" is ambiguous, some respondents interpreted this to mean their whole holiday. Luckily, there are a large number of open-ended responses to this question.



### Complete list of the open-ended answers from Question 16.

Keep in mind that a few of these are obviously in reference to the visitor's whole holiday.

*"We like it a bit more 'acoustic', without the use of amplifiers and loudspeakers?"*

*"Sometimes only two persons play songs. We prefer larger band with more fiddle, pipes, etc"*

*"It exceeded our expectations. The variety and skill level were amazing. It was such a relaxed atmosphere. It was a moving experience, bith lively and melancholy (ballads)"*

*"It was NOT as 'impromptu' as I had hoped"*

*"To many people"*

*"I think of a session as musicians coming in and out as they see fit into the tunes not playing to please the tourists"*

*"Country western and some folk"*

*"Raining – expected summer light"*

*"It is unfortunate that commercialisation removes the spontenaeciety of a true 'gathering', but it is good nonetheless"*

*"too 'many' people, more participation, would like more singing"*

*"I'm hoping to attend a session in a pub where there are locals and not just tourists"*

*"It seemed pre-planned (with microphones – get rid of those!) instead of impromptu; also pubs very crowded – need more or? Pub service still great though"*

*"Wanted to here some flutes, pipers and fiddlers also"*

*"It was more"*

*"Pretty much, was only able to stop in briefly, plan to try again"*

*"Really enjoyed hearing Ceili Bandits"*

*"I'd like to see even more"*

*"In Holland we sing and hear other songs"*

*"And more"*

*"Started too late in the pub for me"*

*"No, it was better"*

*"And better, very energetic and varied in nature"*

*"Limerick & U. Lim. – fabulous ceilis and perf.; Dublin – hard to find trad. Music; Meath – no 'music'; Doolin – OK, not enough 'choice'. I'd like to hear solo traditional players and bands and see dancing and dance myself. Need more easily gained info on who plays where"*

*"Too much cigarette smoke – Could not stay!"*

*"Even more"*

*"Did not know what to expect (no expectations)"*

*"Starts too late"*

*"People in pubs not as friendly/welcoming as we expected. Otherwise, beautiful"*

*"I expected more musicians. It's not spontaneous anymore. Nobody joining in!"*

*"In Doolin – No. The people are not very nice and when they can fiddle us, they do"*

*"Yes for music (I come from Brittany but less Irish to hear music compare to the tourists)"*

*"It has been wonderful"*

*"We had no expectations whatsoever, but ye*

*"Too many people in the pub, too noisy, nobody really paid attention to the musicians"*

*"It was in a pub in Galway. We didn't plan on it!"*

*"more!"*

*"The weather is much worse than I expected; especially it is very cold"*

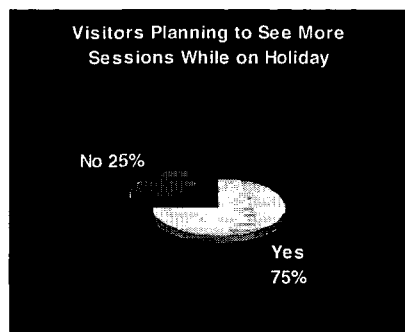
*"Didn't know what to expect but it was great"*

*"Excellent!"*

*"One night bsolutely excellent (Ceili Bandits). Other nights more ordinary session, but that's also good"*

**Question 17: Do you plan to see anymore sessions on this holiday?**

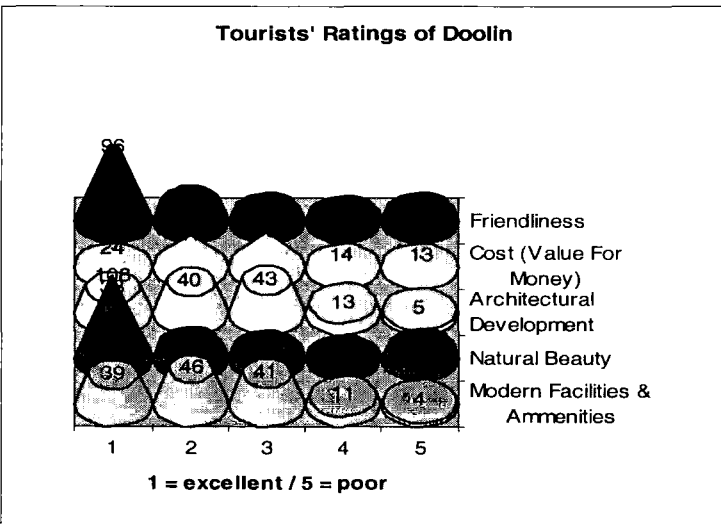
This question does not specify where the respondent would see another session, in Doolin or elsewhere. However, it highlights the fact that traditional Irish music is an extremely popular tourist attraction in general.



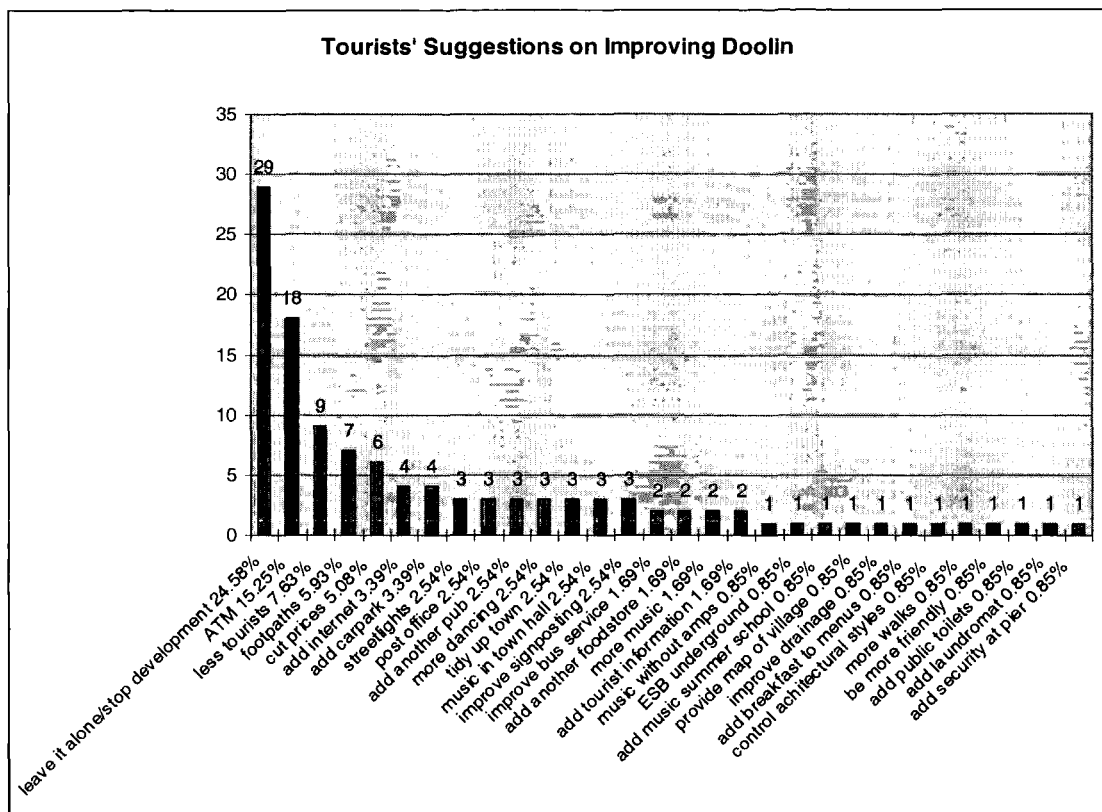
**Question 18: How would you rate Doolin in terms of:**

- a) modern facilities and amenities
- b) natural beauty
- c) architectural development
- d) cost (value for money)
- e) friendliness

It is obvious that tourists find Doolin to be a friendly place, rich with natural beauty. Many people felt that the architectural development of the area should be controlled. The numbers on Doolin’s “modern facilities and ammenities” are a bit hard to interpret because many people rated them “low” and then wrote in the margins “But that’s a GOOD thing” or something to that effect. Obviously, value for money is a big concern right now throughout Ireland, and Doolin is no different. Not surprisingly, this category received the worst ratings overall.



## Question 19: How might Doolin be improved?



## Question 19: A complete list of tourists' suggestions on how to improve Doolin:

*"Street Lights".*

*"ATM machine".*

*"New large roads".*

*"Please keep Doolin & its natural beauty".*

*"Internet café".*

*"A food store with a wider range of food, groceries. Maybe one more public house with trad. Music (without using amplifiers and loudspeakers)?"*

*"Don't get too built up and touristy".*

*"More toilets. Cut the prices!"*

*"Good facilities on a not to large scale (no large hotels, etc.)"*

*"There is little need for improvement – an ATM machine would be helpful. Provide more set dancing"*

*"I was surprised that there is no post office in Doolin – but actually the drop box is sufficient"*

*"You need a bank, maybe some sidewalks or a slightly wider road, the main road gets too crowded."*

*"Internet, public facilities, breakfast places, and one more pub"*

*"No more building!! –esp big houses/B&Bs which are not in keeping with the area."*

*"Keep it small. I lived in a tourist town in Northern CA. 900 pop. On a Sat in the summer 3000. Loses the feel. Don't become California with lots of houses. Also no tacky leprechaun tourist shops. Keep it real."*

*"Better walking access to portions of Doolin."*

*"Keep it the same."*

*"A little less expensive, a little more music".  
is".*

*"Leave it just as it is"*

*"Keep it as it is – stop housing development. "*

*"Wouldn't!"*

*"Sign posts, more walking routes".*

*"Cash machine/bank withdrawal facility."*

*"ATM. Put an ATM in non-taking credit card pubs. Internet access"*

*"It's fine the way it is except bring some dancing opportunities"*

*"ATM (cash machine); somewhere one can picnic; functioning public toilets; more acceptance of credit card in pubs or ATM machine"*

*"They need more parking for cars."*

*"Do not rent rooms above a pub!"*

*"More car parks, pedestrian walkways"*

*"Fewer rental cars, have people come on the bus – keep it rural – save your farms."*

*"Many tourist signs are missing or stolen"*

*"Less construction."*

*"More Irish, less tourists."*

*"The town has become too touristy. The "sessions" seem to be hired musicians who are paid to entertain the tourists. This has been authenticated by my friends who live here. The streets are far too narrow and hazardous to pedestrians. I love the area around Doolin, but not Doolin itself. The pub food was good though and, being a woman travelling alone, I felt completely safe here. I wish I could have visited Doolin about 15 years ago when it wasn't so big. However, I understand that tourism is a vital economic need for the West."*

*"Don't build anymore."  
(larger)."*

*"Local bus, post office, food store*

*"Keep speed of cars down, more Irish dancing, more musicians, maybe build a big stage/auditorium for those who want to listen only & save pubs for the younger crowd."*

*"Keep it just the way it is! Limit growth!"      "Security at the pier and car park!"*

*"Have not looked at Doolin – passing through on to further destination"*

*"Build a movie theatre. Post statistics of fatalities on the Cliffs of Moher for those with a dark side. Otherwise the town is perfect."*

*"Nothing has to be done, otherwise it wouldn't be the Doolin we got to know"*

*"Pedestrian walkway between the 2 parts of town"*

*"Don't change anything."*

*"ATM, cash, bank availability."*

*"A cash machine"  
lovely."*

*"Please don't change Doolin. It is so*

*"Price of B&Bs are the saem as in larger cities & towns (Kinsale, Kenmare) & there is much less to do"*

*"Pub/restaurant/music nearer to Nagle's camp site/Doolin pier"*

*"Little summer villas promise to blight the beautiful coast"*

*"It's a nice small village".*

*"Leave it as it is".      "For whom?"*

*"Not necessary".*

*"A clear map of the village"*

*"Bank, tourist info office, additional public lighting between both parts of Doolin"*

*"Stop charging to view natural sites (Cliffs of Moher)"*

*"No idea"*

*"Sidewalks to McGann's & McDermott's, ATM machine"*

*"Leave it as it is. No more holiday homes."*

*"Bank, Internet"*

*"That's not have to be improved. Doolin is the best place to relax. Sometimes it's good if you don't get all the modern facilities."*

*"Less housing development."*

*"Less tourism"*

*"ATM!"*

*"Wider Streets, more trees."*

*"We don't know"!*

*"ATM, better public transport from pier to town"*

*"Better orientation/directional signs would help."*

*"Footpaths."*

*"Had no time just passing through"*

*"It's fine. I've got no idea".*

*"Bord Failte have a centre in Doolin. A nice coffee tes shopat the pier"*

*"Like it as it is"*

*"An ATM and laundromat".*



*"Lower prices for eating out".*

*"Stay the way it is".*

*"What to do if the weather is bad? There might be a nice indoor activity."*

*"Food/restaurants are expensive. Sometimes as tourists we feel like a burden in pubs/restaurants."*

*"Architectural control to keep Doolin uniformly traditional".*

*"Bank."*

*"We've only just arrived, therefore hard to comment."  
machine."*

*"ATM*

*"Fewer tourists. Less tour buses. Less B&Bs."*

*"Leave it as it is."*

*"Bank/ATM is missing. Village is full of cars, therefore a central carpark outside the village would be fine."*

*"A difficult one: most people don't mind walking to the pub but feel vulnerable using narrow roads without footpaths on dark nights with fast uncaring car drivers. –Solution, shrink the strung out conurbation to a smaller denser unit with good lighting. –Impossible I'm afraid."*

*"I don't really know. The roads are very narrow but that's also some of the charm and you might also get too tourist-adjusted or adapted (don't know the real word)."*

*"Open the post office. Stop development before it ruins Doolin."*

*"Better bus connections (more busses a day)."*

*"Less touristical / keep the rural character."*

*"Not been here long enough to be able to say."*

*"There are too many houses scattered around (but you can't change that)."*

*"ATM machine, less focus on pub – more concerts in local hall, phone cards to be sold in local stores, cut grass @ crossroads, especially at the top of castle road cut briars on the road down to Doolin from Castle View to Fisherstreet."*

*"Facelift to property in village and improvement to drainage."*

*"Doolin Ferries charges too much and they were pushy at the parking lot and talking bad about the other ferry company."*

*"Regular concerts in village hall, Micho Russell Summer School, College of trad. Music. Signs for pubs etc., a display of flowers in village & entrance, get rid of the high poles (phone & ESB) underground!"*

“Word of mouth” and guidebooks are by far the two most common ways that people learn about Doolin (Question 12). Both of these methods depend largely on the reputation of the place amongst the tourist community at large. In light of that knowledge, the tourists’ opinions about Doolin are central to the future health of Doolin’s tourist economy, and the critiques and suggestions presented here should be taken seriously. As in other surveys that have asked for suggestions, some of them are far-fetched, low priorities, or even irrelevant. I find it interesting that most of the suggestions are, however, similar to many of the desires of the local community written into the Doolin submission to the 2003 North Clare Development Plan.

## Appendix 2: Accompanying CD Liner Notes

Excluding tracks 1 & 2, all recordings were made by Adam R. Kaul between July, 2002 and August, 2003 in northwest County Clare, Ireland. Under no circumstances shall any of these recordings be reproduced without the express, written permission of the author.

### **Tracks 1 & 2:**

O'Connor's Pub, 1959. I got this recording from an informant who, presumably, got it second hand from a music archive. Track 1 is a whistle solo accompanied by a bodhran. The second track features a fiddler and a flute-player, and in the background one can hear dancers.

### **Track 3:**

Vaughan's Pub, Kilfenora, summer 2003. I recorded these set dancers with the microphone pointed at their feet in order to capture the "battering" of the dancers. There were four groups of eight dancers that night. The musicians sat on a stage at the back of the room and the music was amplified.

### **Track 4:**

This recording was made at Cleary's Pub in July 2002 during the Willy Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay, just down the coast from Doolin. It's a great example of the 'atmosphere' that's present during some festival sessions. The musicians and the audience are clearly energised. It's also a good example of what virtuosos sound like. A larger group of musicians were left out of this set because they couldn't keep up with the speed and the tune changes of the button-box accordion player and the banjo-player.

### **Tracks 5 & 6:**

I recorded Davey Griffin at O'Connor's Pub in Doolin one September day in 2002. He plays "sing-song" music everyday between noon and 6:00 p.m. during the month of September. He sings Irish ballads, songs from musicals, and other popular songs. He accompanies himself on a button-box accordion. On these tracks, you can hear him teasing the crowd and trying to get them sing along. I specifically asked him to sing these two songs ("Que Sera Sera" and "My Lovely Rose of Clare") since they songs he sang everyday during September.

### **Track 7:**

This is the band *The Ceili Bandits* recorded on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, 2003. *The Ceili Bandits* are Eoin O'Neill (bouzouki), Quentin Cooper (mandolin, guitar, *didjereedoo*), and Yvonne Casey (fiddle). On this particular night, they were accompanied by an unknown *djembe* player. This is a great example of the influence that rock-and-roll and 'world music' has had on the traditional Irish music scene in Doolin. It's also a good example of the sheer volume of summer sessions. The crowd noise was reduced in this recording because I was able to record directly through the PA system. However, the music becomes heavily distorted about half-way through the track. The concert-like cheering is typical of summer sessions. At the end of the *didjereedoo* solo, you can also hear Eoin asking Quentin "Are you done?" before he and Yvonne come back in with the traditional dance tune.

**Track 8:**

This set was recorded on the afternoon of January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at O'Connor's Pub in Doolin. A photographer from New York had asked Christy Barry to organise a session for him to shoot. In that sense it was a wholly 'contrived' session, and yet, it was discussed for weeks afterward as a 'mighty session.' The musicians are Christy Barry (whistle), Terry Bingham (concertina), Kevin Griffin (banjo), Yvonne Casey (fiddle), Adam Shapiro (fiddle), and Richard Gere (guitar). You can hear Christy leading the group as the 'alpha musician'. When he moves onto a new tune the rest of the group waits a moment to hear what he's playing before joining in.

**Tracks 9 - 13:**

This was recorded on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at O'Connor's Pub. It's an example of the kind of intimate session that one gets in the wintertime where music and conversation amongst consociate relations can create 'good craic'. There were only a few dozen Doolin residents in the pub that night and possibly a few tourists. The musicians were Christy Barry (flute), Mike O'Dyer (flute), Terry Bingham (concertina), Ian Lambe (guitar), and Jamie Storer singing a song on track 13.

**Tracks 14 - 16:**

This was recorded two weeks later on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003. It's another example of a winter session, but one that's a bit more energetic. The frenetic energy of this weekly session was provided by a young virtuoso concertina player named Hugh Healey who regularly competes and wins at All-Ireland *Fleadhanna*. You can hear him stomping his foot to keep the rhythm. In the background you can hear tourists from France and America. The musicians are Hugh Healey (concertina), Noel O'Donoghue (button-box accordion) and John King (button-box accordion). At the beginning of track 15, you can also hear John King telling a story about a stolen accordion. It's a small example of how discourse about traditional Irish music is passed along between musicians during sessions. Later, even while playing, he continues to talk to the audience.

